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THE CHINESE IMAGE IN SINO-HOLLYWOOD CO-PRODUCED BLOCKBUSTERS
DURING THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

By

ZHEWEN SONG

Under the Direction of Ethan Tussey, PhD

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the global-local interplay among three key players, which are Hollywood, Chinese government, and Chinese film industry, by analyzing representations of China and Chinese culture in three kinds of modes of film cooperation between Hollywood and China in the era of globalization. Drawing on both the analysis of three factors respectively and the elaboration of tripartite push-and-pull, a spectrum of film collaboration has been built to find out how the leveraging powers work, indicating that the images of China in selected films manifest a shared cultural identity that is hybridized and market-friendly. By further discussing China's position in global competition, it reveals China's ambition to brand itself as a global media power instead of a media capital.

INDEX WORDS: Globalization, Chinese Film Industry, Hollywood

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ZHEWEN SONG

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the College of the Arts

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2017

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DURING THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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August 2017

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and my parents for all their support and unselfish love.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE TUG-OF-WAR IN GLOBAL FILM MARKET	9
2.1 Hollywood’s Pandering Policies to Chinese Market.....	10
2.2 Chinese Censorship Policy as Negotiating Power	16
2.3 Chinese Characteristic Marketization Serving for Both Ends.....	24
3 CASE STUDIES.....	34
3.1 Methodology	36
3.2 Three Types of Film Cooperation Between China and Hollywood.....	39
3.3 The Discourse Analysis of Three Films.....	45
3.3.1 “Fake Roles” in Fake Co-Productions	46
3.3.2 Chinese (Females) Being Heroes/Heroines.....	53
3.3.3 Kung Fu China in Co-Productions.....	60
4 BRANDING CHINA AS A GLOBAL MEDIA POWER	69
4.1 Curtin on Media Capital	71
4.2 Bollywood vs. Chinawood	74
4.3 Brandscapes of Chinawood.....	87
5 CONCLUSION	95

REFERENCES..... 98

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization has intensified the connections among cultural industries of countries worldwide. Transnational media collaboration has increased along with the growth of global media power and local media capitals. The cinema in the United State, mostly referred to Hollywood, has influenced the development of film industries across the world in the trend of globalization. A transnational and integrated pattern of cinematic practice is formed by Hollywood to gain maximum economic benefits from global markets.

Due to the potential of its growing domestic film market and its reform in cultural policies since the marketization of the industry, China has increasingly gained negotiation power when it is confronting Hollywood's far-reaching influence. Hollywood studios, on the one hand, pander to the Chinese market by inserting more Chinese features in blockbusters, aiming to take advantage of this booming market as a response to the shrinking box office in Western countries and the inflated costs of big budgets. Chinese authorities, on the other hand, have endeavored to promote China's national identity as soft power via media platforms across the world. The mutual needs and shared interests help to generate the increasing transnational media co-ventures between Hollywood and the Chinese film industry, facilitating a typical representation of China and Chinese culture in such film collaboration.

The argument of this thesis is that, situated in the era of globalization, the Chinese representation in Sino-Hollywood film collaboration is portrayed as a shared cultural identity combining Chinese cultural markers like Kung Fu with Hollywood's mature formula of blockbuster. This identity is created to be both marketable for global audiences and also culturally and politically sensitive to censorship system in China, reflecting the global-local interplay among Hollywood, Chinese state power and its domestic film industry based on power

relation and economic interests. Such representation is also the manifestation of the brandscape strategy of Chinawood, indicating that Chinese film industry still requires the enhancement of soft power so as to become a global media power as a competitor of Hollywood in the future.

Three key words should be emphasized in each discussion section of the whole thesis, which are globalization, co-production, and representation. In the age of globalization, Hollywood, backed by global capitalism, has led the media trend in a world market, creating a universal values system that has been adapted by media products worldwide.

Many insightful academic works have deeply explored the historical, economic, political and industrial achievements of Hollywood on world stage since the beginning of the twenty-first century, such as *Global Hollywood* (2001) co-written by Toby Miller et al. and its continuation *Global Hollywood 2* (2005), and Paul Grainge's *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age* (2008). These works go beyond the traditional debate around cultural imperialism since the 1960s and discuss the alternative power within the industrial policies and neoclassical economics for Hollywood to occupy the world market in the era of globalization.

Global Hollywood emphasizes on policies, social issues, labors, productive, distributional, promotional and screening protocols of the industry in Hollywood during the globalization. It works on substantial case studies through statistical, financial, and political analyses based on a method combining political economy and cultural studies, providing an insight of methodology used in this thesis. This book depicts a complete industrial story of Hollywood's expansion from television programs to films. In the third chapter, "Co-producing Hollywood", authors investigate the motivations behind treaty and equity productions between Hollywood and Europe since the 1990s through case studies and policy analysis. The cause-and-effect analysis between

cultural policies and media practices provides a practical example for the third chapter of this thesis on case studies.

Through comparing E.U.-Hollywood collaboration and that of Sino-Hollywood, it is academic worthy of studying the latter because it highlights a new global media order built on the film collaboration since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Struggling with regional cultural system and economic reforms, depressed media creativity and Hollywood's strong market share, media industries in the E.U. have been compelled to import cheap Hollywood's productions to fill the vacancy, on the one hand, and to protect their national interests and identities, on the other. Different from pan-European media giants with leveraging power "remaining partners rather than adversaries to Hollywood", the transnational media conglomerates in China demonstrate a complex relation of both cooperation and competition with the latter (Miller et al. 107). Therefore, it is important in this thesis to study the unique circumstances of the co-production between China and Hollywood in the era of globalization from the perspective of media industries studies to learn how the dynamic cooperative relation forms and influences productive formula of blockbusters aiming at the global market through individual links of media practices.

Another key word, co-production, is also discussed by two scholars in book-length works, which are *Hollywood Made in China* (2017) written by Aynne Kokas and *Wendy Su's China's Encounter with Global Hollywood: Cultural Policy and the Film Industry, 1994-2013* (2016). Sino-Hollywood film collaboration as an increasingly important mode of cooperation between the global media power and a local media region shows the global-local dynamic in the capital, policy making, and product consumption.

This thesis is inspired by Aynne Kokas' discussion on an in-depth and multiple-facet film collaboration between China and Hollywood. Comparing to Miller's two kinds of co-production between E.U. and the United States, Sino-Hollywood co-ventures present more diverse and wide range due to the unique situation. In Chapter 3, Kokas classifies total seven kinds of film collaboration between China and Hollywood according to cultural policy and regulatory framework, which lays the foundation for the chapter on case studies in this thesis. She further asserts that the regulatory power grants Chinese government considerable control over both foreign capital in domestic exhibition and over the content of Hollywood imported to China. This thesis will enlarge her argument to the extent that the control is not one-sided but is bidirectional due to the market incentives that she ignored in the discussion. Based on shared interests on the global market, despite the strong negotiation power held by the state and regulators, Sino-Hollywood collaboration is also shaped and formed by mutual benefits between two media industries, such as the increasing co-ventures on equity co-production, which is a model of co-production relatively free from political control. Her method in this chapter is very pragmatic that she only "parses" the "definition of the ranges of co-production activities" between China and the United States, which left space for this thesis to further explore the different types of film co-production through analyzing detailed industrial contexts and cinematic texts (Kokas 16). Additionally, rather than studying the whole seven kinds, three primary modes are concentrated in this thesis so as to conclude the typical Chinese representations in such films more clearly.

Wendy Su's *China's Encounter with Global Hollywood* (2016) is also a recently published work on the global-local interplay between the two parties, focusing on cultural policy and the film industry from 1994 to 2013. By filling the gap of the blank period from 2013 till present,

this thesis continues Su's work on discussing the changes in the global media industry in recent years. Su's book is "the first systematic investigation" of the influential engagement between Chinese film industry and Hollywood, and the author emphasizes Chinese domestic film industry (five chapters) with heavier proportion comparing to the discussion of Hollywood (three chapters) (2). However, for this thesis, all three entities weights equally because the triangular spectrum can only be built as long as all three factors simultaneously acting on the industrial operation.

A critical approach centers on the "global-local dialectic" adopted by Su is also adapted on film industries in this thesis (Su 2). Su's elaboration on the film industry as negotiating space in the third chapter of her book supports the main argument in the second chapter of this thesis. Chinese cultural policymaking served as negotiation power has shaped and been influenced by the operation within the film industries. Su suggests that the marketization of film industry is characterized by both market forces and government interventions, which is also concluded in this thesis.

Both Kokas' and Su's works provide examples of methodology for this thesis. In *Hollywood Made in China*, the author adopts both a macro-level examination of policies and a micro-level exploration of actual practices. This approach is also employed in the second and third chapters of this thesis. Su exploits a mixture of methodology in her work including industrial studies, cultural studies and political economic approach. Kokas uses large amount of industrial press releases from Hollywood Reporter and Variety as well as Chinese websites on the industrial news. Statistical analyses and the interpretation of cultural policies from official documents are also included in Su's book, which helps to justify the material selection in this thesis. Their works prove that the industrial materials such as press release, interviews, industrial reports and

official handbooks can provide hidden information within the industrial culture, revealing the power relation behind the cinematic texts, similar to John Caldwell's methodology introduced in *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (2008).

The third key word is representation. Asian Americans or Chinese Americans in the media environment have been widely discussed by scholars like Jun Xing (1998) on the issue of cultural identities, and Scholars such as Naomi Greene and Gina Marchetti published academic works to investigate the Chinese or Asian representations in Hollywood films, respectively from the perspectives of cultural studies and sociological and racial studies. Marchetti's book (1993) focuses on the exploration of the alienation and foreignness of Asians in Hollywood films from the 1910s to the 1980s, an era that was mostly influenced by the Yellow Peril frenzy, through the lens of sociological and racial studies. The political economic analysis she used to foreground the influential power of social forces can also be utilized in this thesis' discourse analysis on representational elements in cinematic texts. Although her study on representation is limited to a past period of time, her analysis can still be exploited to explain the problem of female representations in today's Sino-Hollywood co-produced blockbusters.

Greene (2014) discover how China has been perceived and portrayed in Hollywood films during the past several decades in her book *From Fu Manchu to Kung Fu Panda: Images of China in American Film*. In a chronological structure, Greene (2014) concludes that the portrayal of images of China by Hollywood is in accordance with current Sino-US relation in political and social domain, and American cinema has been engaging with reflecting Chinese culture and identity in a dualistic approach (12-14). Building around the Orientalism theory of Edward Said, Greene stresses mainly on the political and social forces that shape the representation of China in Hollywood films. The industrial factors she ignored also greatly impact on the portrayal of

image. Therefore, this thesis pays much attention on the industrial discourse analysis, which distinguishes it from Greene's book.

The fourth chapter of this thesis is mainly inspired by In Grainge's *Brand Hollywood*. The author investigates how branding becomes "an organizing principle" in the media economy of global Hollywood from 1995 to 2003, similar to the description of "brandscape" introduced by Kokas (Grainge 14). In this thesis, the Chinese cultural policy as negotiation power top-down guides film industries collaboration between China and the United States within the industrial space to seek for short-term plan of brand-building, resulting in the lack of soft power of content making, and ultimately leads to the shared cultural pastiche as the representation of China in films. In Grainge's book, centering on creating and maintaining marketable brands, the transnational media conglomerates in Hollywood have built their empire around the production, promotion and exhibition of the branded films. Focusing on power relation in the globalized industry, the author builds up his work in three parts, which are practice, poetics and policy of branding. The first part talks about branding as discourse to create core value attracting consumers to its product and service, indicating that the soft power should exist prior to producing cultural products. The second part explores the branding regarding the negotiation between tangible studios and intangible trademark power. Such negotiation can be borrowed to the discussion of the right of decision making belongs to the brand holder rather than the site keeper. And the last part discusses how the materialized landmark contributes to the marketing strategy, "demonstrate how the global expansion of theatrical venues is linked to customization of entertainment space for regional city identity" (Grainge 155). Such global-local dynamic in the last part resembles Sino-Hollywood brandscape sharing on branded properties. My discussion will further enlarge the author's discussion of the marketing of Hollywood-made

blockbusters by exploring how the shared brands work in Chinese film industry. Chinese film industry brands itself merely through sharing products and services with Hollywood as a short cut to enhance its world influence, at the expense of delay in development of the country's capacity of building its brands.

The first part the discussion talks about the engagement between China and Hollywood in the era of globalization. It embodies the complex negotiations between authoritarian power and industrial marketization, between strong local money and global capitalism, and between the Party's interests and market demands worldwide, leading to a spectrum that covers the Sino-Hollywood film collaboration of blockbusters aiming at world market. Caldwell's methodology on industry culture will be adopted to connect industrial materials to the understanding of power relation within the industrial practices.

A mixture method combining Caldwell's industry culture and political economic approach will be exploited in the second part of the discussion. Chinese representation in media products are generated within the framework constructed by the continuous tug-of-war among Hollywood, Chinese authority, and Chinese transnational filmmakers, dominated by the profit-oriented nature of market mechanism and the control of the state in the pursuit of enhancing soft power. Through a close analysis of the Chinese representations in Sino-Hollywood blockbusters, such as *The Great Wall*, *The Martian*, and *Iron Man 3*, this chapter addresses the Chinese representations in Sino-Hollywood blockbusters in the era of globalization.

By comparing the formation and development of Bollywood and Chinawood, the third part of the discussion aims to examine China's status in global media industry based on Curtin's concept of media capital. By introducing Kokas' idea on brandscape, the last part of the discussion aims to make the connection between Chinese representation and the manifestation of

brandscape strategy of Chinawood and to find out how this strategy shapes the brand-building of China and influences the formation of a global media power.

2 THE TUG-OF-WAR IN GLOBAL FILM MARKET

In this chapter, three entities, including Hollywood studios, Chinese state and regulators, and Chinese film industry with its practitioners, form a spectrum that delimits the industrial practices in each process of Sino-Hollywood film collaboration that is shaped by the three factors in the tug-of-war based on power relation and market incentives. The Chinese representation in such jointly produced film is portrayed as a shared identity with cultural markers like Kung Fu to create familiarity and marketability aiming at global audiences.

Borrowing Caldwell's methodology on production culture (2009), this chapter foregrounds on the industrial discourses during the dynamic interplay between three identities by collecting and interrogating trade publications, press releases, and film texts. The reason why to choose these materials is that they can best represent the "off-screen media production work worlds" according to Caldwell (200). In the purpose of detailing the power relation and negotiation among three entities during the back-and-forth testing in film collaboration, each will be discussed around the industrial materials independently and collaboratively, in order to get an overall picture that ultimately shapes the actual industrial practices as discussed in the next chapter.

Hollywood's engagement with China has come across opportunities as well as conflicts. The collaboration and competition between Chinese and Hollywood foreground on the Hollywood's pursuits of Chinese market and China's quest for global media power. The changing cultural policies from Chinese regulators have been serving the interests of the state and the Party, that is, to enhance its soft power and build up the cultural strength to compete with global Hollywood. A

state-crafted transition to marketization on film industry aims to adjust the production of motion pictures as a strategic exercise of global market incentives, enable the growth of domestic film industry, and promote images of China to the world. Both domestic filmmakers and Hollywood outsiders are under strict censorship and regulation by Chinese authority on every link of filmmaking from content to exhibition. The tensions among economic interests of both Hollywood and domestic filmmakers, market pressure from demands of global audiences, the freedom of creation and the policy tools from the government form a spectrum to regulate the limits and boundaries of film production between China and Hollywood, generating a compromised and hybridized culture that matches the unique social and economic environment.

2.1 Hollywood's Pandering Policies to Chinese Market

Hollywood's global expansion has encountered a booming Chinese market with unique economic and political environment. Its media products output has been strictly censored and restricted by the Chinese regulators, and the revenue-share from its marketable blockbusters are unilaterally regulated by Chinese film policies, whereas its collaboration with local filmmakers explores the potential of its benefiting from the world's second largest market. Learning from past experiences, Hollywood studios have realized that pandering policies of self-censored blockbusters with Chinese elements that make the country look good are encouraged by both the box office and the state authority from China.

The pandering policy contains three steps. The first step is for blockbusters being self-censored during the producing or post-production prior exporting to China, to avoid anything that is culturally or politically sensitive to Chinese regulators. The second step is to add Chinese elements in blockbusters that aim to earn massive sales and take advantage of favored policy in

the Chinese market. Therefore, the Chinese elements should be friendly to both audiences and the authority, which leads to the final step, that is, to define what is China-friendly plot/element.

Hollywood “blockbusters have a financial interest in making China look good”, and they carefully make sure that “films are China-friendly”, because they have “learned from past experiences that deviations from a China-friendly strategy are punished, either by the Chinese public at the box office or by film authorities by outright bans” (Rosen, 2011). During years of testing by inserting different portrayals of Chinese representations in films, Hollywood has concluded that the so-called “China-friendly” plots are depicting China as a country strong in economy and technology, either in ancient or modern times.

It is fundamental for this section first to discuss why the Chinese market is so important that Hollywood has to specifically pander to it, rather than adopting the same policy on content-design for markets in other countries.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hollywood films accounted for more than 70 percent of films screened in Western countries and occupied a 90 percent market share around the world (Stille 1). In many countries, Hollywood is regarded as more than a foreign source for films, but as *the cinema* (Creton 106). Although the domestic market in the United States is the world’s largest market and the reference market for film producing, most sales are earned from other geographic markets in the world in recent years.

Blockbusters produced by Hollywood are designed to appeal to global audiences with huge market potential. High production budgets and large marketing costs are expecting correspondingly high earnings from the theatre ticket sales around the world. Hollywood’s blockbusters are not looking for target audience but for mass audiences, therefore, the marketability, which contains features including genre, celebrity, special effect, familiarity as a

franchise or sequel, promotional hype, and pre-release strategy, is foremost concerned by studios (O'Reilly and Kerrigan 770). Such blockbusters are usually in fantasy, sci-fi, action or adventurous genres in 3D or IMAX formation with excessive computer-generated imagery, played by world famous stars, and produced with several sequels. The most successful Hollywood blockbusters are represented by *The Lord of the Ring* franchise, *Harry Potter* film series, and Marvel's superhero film constellation, which are not culturally specific but are highly entertaining for global audiences.

As Chinese market growing to be the second-largest one in the world, along with the sales downturn in European market as well as the increased production and marketing costs for blockbusters, Hollywood's involvement in film market of this country seems both urgent and inevitable, especially after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 (Roxborough). Facing with the once-closed market with huge potential at present, Hollywood endeavors to grab as large as possible market share due to the profit-driven nature of the industry whereas it still struggles with its unique political and economic situation there.

The long-lasting trade agendas promoted by the American government for decades has been hampered in China where all industries and business activities are under the guidance of central government, serving for the Party's demands as priority. Censorship, film quotas and revenue share policy restrict the number and the content of imported Hollywood blockbuster, as well as limit profits that Hollywood earned from Chinese box office. During years of opening-up in China, quotas of revenue-shared imported Hollywood films has loosened from 10 (1995) to 34 (2012). Most of them are big-budget productions, and Hollywood has received an increased profit from 13% to 25% of box office sales, though still lower than 35% as the world standard of revenue share.

Concerning the strict censorship system and film quota on imported films, Hollywood studios have to be cautious on their content making in order to successfully output films to China. Although most of their blockbusters or tentpole films are not targeting to individual nation or culture, the different political ideologies in China and America may still lead to sensitivities that are prohibited by Chinese regulatory agency. Therefore, a strategy of self-censored is first adopted by the Big Six as the initial step of pandering policy to China.

Learning from Disney's "mistake" of producing the film *Kundun* (1997) based on Tibet's human rights problem, which annoyed the Chinese government who banned media products from Disney, Hollywood's major studios avoid adding sensitively racial or political issues in blockbusters that aim at global market. Disney later produced *Mulan* (1998), a film presenting a brave and lovable Chinese female from an ancient folktale around the topic of love and family, showing its hope of winning back the Chinese market. The "dynamic shift from political concerns to economic opportunities" in Disney's case indicates that it is a consensus for Hollywood studios to realize that a unique pandering policy should be adopted specifically for Chinese market due to its importance (Yu 13).

Comparing to the non-cultural/political specific policy of producing blockbusters for the global audience, the initial stage of pandering policy for China seems to be culturally specifically sensitive in case of offending. Importing only thirty-four Hollywood-made, consisting of twenty regular ones and fourteen in 3D or Imax, films with anything sensitive can hardly pass the examination, because there is always a large amount of other alternative choices (Frater). To secure a place in the competition, Hollywood studios self-censor their films as the first step of pandering policy before exporting. The remake of a 1984 classic *Red Dawn* (2012), produced by MGM, modified its plot by changing the villains from Chinese to North Koreans, costing extra

one million dollars (Hughes). Sony also examined *Pixels* (2015) and removed an attack on the Great Wall in the original version to increase the chance of being screened in China (Baldwin and Cooke). Let alone Marvel's dramatically changing Mandarin to a hybridized clown in *Iron Man 3* (2013), and Tilda Swinton was casted as the enchanter instead of a Tibetan player in *Dr. Strange* (2016) to avoid political sensitivities (Wong).

Comparing to 25% revenue of importing films, producers of co-production films enjoy 43% share of after-tax ticket sales and bypass the film quota, according to the China-International Film Co-Production Handbook. This type of film production is also encouraged by China for its own political and economic pursuits. Despite the alluring terms, the co-production requires heavy investment in Chinese culture and characters in films, and capital input and shooting locations are also strictly regulated.

The second step of pandering policy can be concluded as culturally specifically catering to Chinese market and regulations. Stimulated by the financial incentives, Hollywood studios are racing to collaborate with Chinese partners on film producing and adding Chinese cultural elements in such co-ventures. However, rather than forcing to do so, Hollywood studios are more intend to admit that adding Chinese elements belongs to the pandering policy initiated by themselves. In fact, even not for the favored policy and higher revenue share, Hollywood filmmakers have been actively inviting Chinese stars, adding Chinese plots or shooting in China for the large market. For example, *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014) invited famous Chinese actress Fan Bingbing to play a mutant with several dialogues. Even *Warcraft* (2016), a video game adaptation with nothing related to Chinese culture, still managed to include Danis Wu, a well-known actor in China, as the motion capture of Gul'dan. Both two films gained remarkable success in Chinese box office.

Providing extra plots for Chinese representations surely adds weights for Hollywood-made blockbusters' sales in the country. However, not all Chinese elopements are welcomed. Disney's third sequel of *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2007) with Chou Yun-fat as a Chinese captain was forced editing for vilifying and defacing the Chinese (Coonan 2007). It can lead to huge loss in box office sales for edited films screening in China because audiences may get a full, piratic version at home instead of watching in theaters.

Therefore, it is not enough to be culturally specifically catering but to be culturally specifically “knowing” what makes China “look good” in film production. Out of economic concern, Hollywood studios intend to accommodate the Chinese government and market by “altering story lines to ensure that references to China are positive” so that the films can be easier to pass the censorship and attracting more audiences (Qin). However, despite the importance of Chinese market, the markets in the rest of the world are also valued by Hollywood studios, if no more than that in China. Hence, the pandering policy of adding China-friendly plots should be concerned together with Hollywood's global strategy, which is less culturally specific, more globally marketable.

Collaborating with Chinese counterparts clearly cuts corners for Hollywood outsiders to understand what actually can be defined as “China-friendly” plots. According to previous successful examples of transnationally-made Kung Fu films, the martial arts is a safe topic for film production. And several attempts in portraying China as a strong modern country with advanced technologies, such as *The Martian* (2015), are also proved to be China-friendly. Containing such cultural markers with marketable topics, such as fantasy, sci-fi, and superhero franchises, Sino-Hollywood collaboration highlights a hybridized filmmaking that is marketable and profitable for both Chinese and overseas markets.

The booming Chinese market attracts Hollywood studios to reach to it for great financial profit potentials. Despite the fact that Sino-Hollywood film collaboration is officially encouraged, Hollywood partners have to test the most profitable production mode step by step due to the unique regulatory environment in China. During the exploration of Chinese market and regulations, the formation of pandering policy by Hollywood studios has been through three steps consisting of self-censoring, adding cultural markers and defining “China-friendly”. Sino-Hollywood collaboration provide a unique aesthetic to present Chinese image as a hybridized cultural identity that is marketable in both China and the world.

2.2 Chinese Censorship Policy as Negotiating Power

The censorship system built and carried out by Chinese regulators serves to both protect and regulate domestic film industry and form a competitive while reconciliatory relation with Hollywood to consolidate the state’s ruling and bargaining power during the dynamic global-local interplay. By narrowing the range of content making and manipulating the distribution and exhibition structures, the Chinese regulatory agency prompts the film industry to generate a mixed film genre that adapts Chinese cultural markers to Hollywood’s mature formula.

By tracing back the evolved censorial regulations on content making and industrial practices over the years, this section aims to discuss how the Chinese regulatory policy negotiate with national and foreign film industries during the dynamic global-local interplay for the sake of protecting national interests. And through analyzing examples of films that either bypass censoring or get banned, this section will further find out how such censorial strategies shape the actual industrial practices in filmmaking and film importing in China.

China’s opaque censorship is ambiguous in rules but rigid in execution. The censorship system is unpredictable with vague guidelines but dependent on sociopolitical control, providing

flexible enforcement and total interpretative right for regulators who serve for the state's and Party's interests, to either resist everything that may harm the state sovereignty or reserve a backdoor for the benefits of the regime. The censorship system acts on both domestic film industry and Hollywood imports, shaping the interactions between the two parties. It also reveals the tensions between the government and the industry, between policy orientation and market demands, which translate Chinese representations in Sino-Hollywood co-ventures to a hybridized identity that is market-friendly to the global with Chinese characteristics through the actual industrial practices that are subject to Chinese cultural policies.

The logic of censorship contains two part. The first part focuses on content making. It only regulates what genre and elements are banned, both to Hollywood imports and domestic made, without explicitly promoting what cultural markers are encouraged. The second part stresses on the industrial practices, the distribution and exhibition structures to be specific. By setting restrictions on imported films, the central government aims at protecting domestic film industry while taking advantage of the revenue generated from foreign imported. Filmmakers from both Hollywood and China have been navigating the market with limited freedom of creating cultural markers.

Before Hollywood's global expansion and the discussion of its cultural imperialism in the era of globalization, China has long history of regarding the West as the enemy and the western culture as "spiritual opium" during the foundation of the country, Korean War, and later Cold War period. Films produced by western countries were once totally forbidden within the country. Even after the cautiously opening doors to the outside in the 1980s, the government and civil relations between China and the West, especially the United States, sensitively varied due to

some political issues. Cultural exchange from various levels was rather cautious at the beginning of the Reform and Opening-up.

Outdated Hollywood films were packaged at a low price to Chinese theatres for the first time in the 1980s, and the first Hollywood blockbuster, *The Fugitive* (starred by Harrison Ford), was imported to several cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, in 1994. The first-time encounter with foreign films detonated the curiosity and enthusiasm of Chinese people towards western cultures and the artistic style of cinema. *The Fugitive* received a relatively huge sale of 25million Chinese yuan, and domestic theaters were also full to bursting during the show time of this film, which was a dramatic contrast to the time when routine Chinese main melody films (a kind of propaganda film praising the value of socialist and the Communist Party) screened (Tian and Yu).

The cracked door to foreign films worked in two directions. The imported films boosted Chinese box office, bring a large amount of revenue to the once hungry film industry of China. James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), imported to China the next year, collected surprisingly over one hundred million Chinese yuan, along with other imported films collecting 80% of total box office sales that year in China (Tian and Yu). Domestic film production also welcomed its spring when Fifth Generation filmmakers earned fame overseas with their realistic films focusing on personal struggles in harsh life instead of party propaganda. Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1993), Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), and Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994) all received awards from film festivals worldwide, and the latter two gained surprising sales of respectively \$4 million dollars and \$2 million dollars in American box office.

However, such flourish was not greeted by the authority. First, all these three prize-winning films were banned in China without exception, because the political campaigns

launched by Chairman Mao and the Communist Party in these films were criticized. Regulators responded to these directors by executing an overall censorial control on domestic filmmaking and screening. Second, fearing that western films may bring “cultural pollution” to Chinese audiences, the ruling party determined to reverse the dangerous trend by outputting more propaganda films. Serious censorship and film quota were also set to both limit competitions and restrict content making on foreign blockbuster and domestic independent productions.

From the perspective of industrial practices, it was regulated that 15 percent of total screen time was reserved for Chinese “key films”, which shared the same value with main melody films, focusing on historic events, as educational tools for children, citizens and the army (Aranburu 10-11). Based on Document No.3 issued in 1993, which regulated a maximum of ten foreign high-quality film entering the market each year (till 2000), “Regulations on Administration of Films” in 1996, also named as “Document 200”, further clarified that revenue-sharing for imported was 13%, and required two-thirds of show time be reserved for domestic films. “Document 200” in 1996 also imposed regulations on cinematic contents of both domestic films and foreign imports, forbidding plots that may “[endanger] the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state”, “[harm] the security, honor and interest of the state”, incite national secession and disrupt “the unity of nationalities”, and leak state secrets, as well as any “other contents prohibited by the state” (Geltzer 128-129).

The regulatory agencies on censorship have evolved through times, gaining stronger power with censorial tactics targeting to the whole range of the media industry. The Ministry of Radio, Film and Television (MRFT) took charge of regulating media and censoring content as a subsidiary to the Propaganda Department of the CCP. The department was reorganized in 1998 to form State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), under the guidance of

Ministry of Information Industry (MII). It was later merged into the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's Republic of China (SAPPRFT) in 2013 with intentionally broad authority on the overall cultural industry in China.

While the door slowly opened since China's entrance into the World Trade Organization (WTO), an increase in film quota, up to 20 revenue-sharing imported films per year, was accepted by the Chinese government in 2001, in exchange for refraining a further action from the United States on the pirate problem in China based on the regulations of the WTO (Smith and Davis). Later in 2012, "Memorandum of Understanding on WTO Related Problems in the Film Industry" signed specifically between China and the United States. Up to 34 Hollywood film (including 14 IMAX or 3D formats) would be imported per year, sharing 25% of box office instead of previous 13%. As a strike-back to Hollywood's intrusion, "Regulations on the Administration of Movies" ("Document 342") was enforced at the end of 2001. Total ten categories of prohibited contents were listed, for both foreign and domestic filmmakers to self-examine all their products intended to be distributed, screened, imported or exported. It clarified the reviewing process in contrast to the abstract list of prohibited subjects. It also added penalties for those who violate the administrative principles. As an advanced version of "Document 200", "Document 342" opened a door for more "unfettered" censorship and granted regulators more power on execution and policy explanation (Geltzer 125). As Patrick Tyler from the New York Times concluded, "the censors won't say what the rules are, and once they have banned a film, they won't even tell directors how to cut it to satisfy their objections" (Patrick). In the "Document 320" issued in 2000, a statement of an overall development of Chinese film industry perfectly revealed the purposes of cultural policies, including censorship system, providing filmmakers at home and abroad a short-cut to crack the censorship code. The document declares

that the transformation of cultural strategies in film industry is to “meet the requirements of the socialist market economy and the WTO”, to “enhance ‘Main Melody’ and encourage diversity”, to “maintain the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)”, and to “ensure the socialist nature of the film industry” (Su 57).

It is an arbitrary censorial system that is intentional made to guarantee both the Party’s interests and the legitimacy of execution. When globalization intertwines media culture and economics, the practical industrial operation may diverge from the demands of cultural policies due to the economic incentives in a market-driven industry. The influential Hollywood films have brought about a great impact on domestic audiences with globally-popular genres and aesthetics, exposing the half-closed market to the global media trend. Local filmmakers are tempted to stand on the shoulders of Hollywood’s giants who have already achieved global success and popularity with mature filmmaking formula, and meanwhile, they have to compete with it within the range of national film market. Therefore, censorship power strikes a balance between the competition and reconciliation through intentional adjustment, forming a wane and wax within the control of the central state.

Therefore, the filmmakers test the tolerability of regulators on censorship, which is often double-standard at its own whim, acting cautiously within the range of censorship code. Both domestic and Hollywood filmmakers are subject to SAPPRFT because any sensitivity that is sensed by it may cause huge losses in box office or film production. The economic concerns force filmmakers to produce within the safe zone, especially for Sino-Hollywood co-ventures who aim at a market as large as possible.

For example, films promoting supernatural or superstition are prohibited in China, whether it is a homemade or an imported, yet the fantasy genre consisted by Hollywood’s big

budgets is widely popular around the world. Hence, more Chinese filmmakers are making fantasy films that without prohibited subjects in it. Chen Jiashang's Chinese fantasy, *Mural* (2011), cancelled many ghost plots in order to pass the examination, and the original setting from the ancient Chinese mythology, which is a female ghost in the mural, was exchanged into the imagined devil within ordinary people (M. Hong). A gothic romance, *Crimson Peak* (2015) and a fantasy reboot *Ghostbusters* (2016) was denied released in Chinese market, yet director del Toro's another monster action film, *Pacific Rim* (2013), a film depicting Hong Kong as the center of rescuing human beings from alien monsters, gained huge in China. It was concluded that "the only exception to SAPPRFT's no-ghost protocol was spirits based in Chinese mythology" or praising Chinese humanity (139-140). Indeed, the official promotion of Zhang Yimou's *The Great Wall* indicates that the story originated from ancient China and decorated by Hollywood's fantasy style is proved to be censorship-friendly for regulators, and its fantasy "outfit" borrowed from Hollywood shows the market potential of this kind of hybridized film.

The double-standard implementation also reflects that the key for filmmaking and film importing to bypass the censor code is to include Chinese characteristics in the genre films that aims at commercial profits. The SARFT/SAPPRFT banned all kinds of time-travel plots in media products in 2011, for the reason of disrespect history. Films like *Back to the Future* (1985) is obviously out of touch in China, and this prohibition gets expanded to films depicting historical events that are suspicious of vilifying Chinese leaders or the Party. However, another Sino-Hollywood co-produced fantasy, *The Forbidden Kingdom* (2008), telling a story a young white male time-travelled from modern New York City to ancient Chinese fairy tale, got widely screened in China without being questioned.

Because China lacked a rating system, excessively violent, crime, nudity, sexual activity, and dirty language are strictly limited for general audiences of all ages, imposing both domestic filmmakers and distributors of imported films self-censored on these sensitive domains before making or exporting films. The last one of Hugh Jackman's Wolverine, *Logan* (2017), was cut 14 minutes violent and nudity scenes, and *Harry Potter* series and *Cloud Atlas* (2012) both encountered plot scissor of Chinese censors, which greatly influences box office sales in China because the piracy versions always show complete films without cut-outs (Schwankert).

From the perspective of industrial practices, the censorship from SAPPRFT also include controlling the screening time of films at its own will. Films, especially blockbusters, may enjoy as long as three months' show time in the United States, however, the same pictures can only be screened for one month in China due to the domestic protection. Even in certain situations, the bureau may force foreign films to end even earlier than scheduled, squeezing more time for homemade films. The summer screen time in China, from June to August, usually called the "domestic film protection" period since 2012, theaters exclude all foreign films to allow homemade films playing without competition; however, the period was temporarily and suddenly open in 2016 for more box office revenue from imported, and it will be closed again in 2017 because of the increased sales domestically (Brzeski).

The authority's evolving policy on film regulation has resulted in a censorship-friendly formula, a combination of Hollywood-style highly popular genre with Chinese cultural elements, in filmmaking or film importing. However, manipulating the film industry through censoring, blocking, or supervising is far from enough to control the ever-changing market in the era of globalization, and it also can't immediately translate to the enhancement of soft power as proclaimed by the government. To properly dealing with the relation between market control and

market demand, the authority also needs to initiate a transformation of the domestic film industry itself.

2.3 Chinese Characteristic Marketization Serving for Both Ends

The aim of the marketization is to benefit from exercising market incentives, yet, apart from profit-driven nature, Chinese film industry also carries on the needs of strengthening the soft power of sovereignty, representing Chinese image to the world. The complex global-local dialectics between Chinese film practitioners and Hollywood multinational conglomerates represent the conflicts between global capital and local agency, which is balanced and negotiated by Chinese cultural policies including censorship system and industrial reform strategy. Therefore, the state regulators, Chinese film sector and Hollywood in Sino-Hollywood co-ventures build up a triangular spectrum that delimits the industrial practices in filmmaking, promoting, distributing and exhibiting, and the three factors shape the Chinese representations in the tug-of-war.

The Chinese characteristic marketization embodies both market economy and planned economy. Marketization means “the act or process of entering into, participating in, or introducing a free market economy” according to Merriam-Webster dictionary,¹ and it also refers to the “economic and sociocultural transformations,” “bringing about privatization, growth, liberalization, and greater choice” in western context (Davis 191). China has transitioned from a planned economy to a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics, influencing the marketization of various industries, including the film industry. However, under the qualifier of “Chinese characteristics,” the marketization of Chinese film industry is destined different from

¹ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marketization>.

the western model. In fact, this transition is supervised and controlled by the Chinese authority, while the industry is enjoying booming investment and favored policies from the state. The unique marketization in China shows the state's internal struggles when the industry is exploring the international market landscape.

To prioritize its own national interest, serving for both the Party's supremacy and the film industry's marketization, the state should take on its roles as "a Party's upholder and a market facilitator" (Su 114). Borrowing from Joseph Nye, the concept of soft power as the ability to attract and to shape the preference of others was adopted by the Chinese government to formulating its own cultural policies in 2011 (Nye 5-6). To advance China's global power through international media platform was enhanced in the "Chinese Dream" speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, highlighting the urgent need for promoting a global perception of national strong economic growth, traditional Chinese cultural and characteristic socialism. Since "cinema is a tool of the soft power of nations", the Chinese state is expecting the cinematic apparatus to "better represent China to the world, in charismatic terms, on a global scale", through "easy consumption with formidable global reach and impact" (Vlassis 483; Davis 191, 217). Although the censorship system introduced in the last section can supervise the film industry serving for the state's and the Party's interests through its industrial practices, it still needs to strengthen the power of the film industry itself to achieve this goal.

On the one hand, Chinese regulators introduced industrialized mechanisms to the domestic film sector in the 1980s, aiming to reduce the economic pressure of domestic film productions through an overall commercialization, including a vertical integration of production, distribution, and exhibition sectors, and encouraging privatization and dispersed shareholdings of film production companies. The marketization also contributes to the commercialization in

content making. Especially after collaborating with foreign film industries, Chinese-made blockbusters are produced based on the established style and mature formula of Hollywood-made. On the other hand, Chinese authorities tend to “commercialize propaganda”, which means to transform the unpopular main melody films into high-concept big-budget productions, or Chinese mainstream blockbusters to be specific, while it simultaneously refuses to lose ideological control over the cultural industry (Wan and Kraus 428).

When the old, giant, clumsy film sector was suddenly pushed to step into the heated competition from the 1980s to the 2000s, the state “employed a variety of administrative measures, mandatory order, market layoffs, and state compensation”, which indicates that the marketization of Chinese film industry is a state-crafted transition to avoid either fully free market conduct or overtly tight state control (Su 87). Both market economy and planned economy shape the industrial reform in film sector of China. When it is appropriate, the state let the market run by itself, taking advantage of efficacy, creativity, and flexibility. The government also never hesitates to interfere the deregulated and free market, when it fears the situation may harm the stable operation. The state can quickly act to assert its authority when the market fails to serve the state’s interests.

In the 1980s, most films produced by limited state-owned studios scattered in several big cities were not making enough profits to maintain the daily operation of theatres or studios, causing great fiscal trouble to the state. The reform was first implemented in the mid-1980s when local film studios converted into a new system of ownership to ease the burden of the government. They started to manage their own film production, distribution and profits as well, breaking away the designed plans and guaranteed earnings from the Film and Television Bureau (the predecessor of SAPPRFT) (Aranburu 5). Without surprise, these studios all came through

fiscal crisis at the beginning, and the situation did not improve until a new revenue-sharing policy and a reform in distribution and exhibition in the early 1990s from the central government (*ibid*).

Both domestic theaters and film studios experienced economic reforms, realizing the power of capital and market. A “transregional shareholding theatre chain” was suggested to establish after a delegation visiting America in 1997, and it was later mandated in 2003 for the sake of building up a controllable national market for exhibition and revenue collection and sharing (Su 81-84). According to “Document 320” in 2000, state-owned studios were required to transform into shareholding corporations, and film groups vertically covering production, distribution and exhibition were suitable for the marketization of traditional film studios.

The state control on capital investment was loosened because the state allowed the industry to take advantage of free money from private and foreign sectors. The overall opening-up in China brought about loosened regulation and flexible market strategies to various industries. Domestic private investments, along with capitals from Hong Kong and Taiwan, flew into the film production and distribution. After the enforcement of “Document 3” in 1993, the state not only encouraged private money invested in state-owned enterprises but also broadened ways for the establishment of private media corporations. Additionally, foreign investments were allowed in Chinese theatres (although they were refuted a few years later), and overseas investors could also fund in revenue-sharing film production up to 49 percent. The multiple investments in film industry directly result in the changing nature of film production from cultural policy-oriented to market incentive-oriented because both private and overseas capitals serve business interests rather than political pursuits in a market-driven industry. Between 2002 to 2005, at least

eight out of ten most profitable films each year were produced or funded by domestic private investment or overseas capitals (Su 90-91).

However, the government still tightly controls the film industry by “narrowing down market access” (Davis 207). Different from Hollywood’s Paramount case in 1948, which prohibited film producers owning their own theaters and screening exclusively films produced by themselves, the Chinese state is encouraging media conglomerates who produce and exhibit simultaneously to decrease competition and guarantee the profits. As one of the most heavyweight film conglomerates, the China Film Group Corporation transforms into the biggest shareholding, central governing, venture group, with expanded subsidies from production, distribution, exhibition, broadcasting, to other industrial linkage such as real estate development and equipment manufacturing, concentrating recourses for the better and tighter regulation of the government. This state-owned film company also is responsible for all the revenue-share foreign film importing and domestic film exporting, letting the state hold the total power of choosing films according to its different political, economic or cultural demands.

The contradictory between the free market economy and Chinese characteristic marketization is originated from the changing cultural policies towards the film industry. In the Sixteenth National Congress meeting, film is officially redefined as a cultural industry, and the cultural industry as a propagandized tool should serve for the socialist core-value system (“shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan” in Chinese), which was defined by President Xi in 2007. Therefore, film functions as a vehicle for the promotion of socialist ideology, and the marketization of film industry aims to better serve the state and the Communist Party, not just corporations, industry, or the marketplace itself (Davis 197).

In addition to the marketization of the framework and construction of the film industry, a reform on the content making should be carried out simultaneously. The marketization started from the production of commercial high concept films (“dapian” in Chinese), followed by Main melody films, initiated in 1987, which have always been one of the favorite propaganda tools for the Party to promote its socialist ideology and leadership’s virtue.

Since the early twentieth century, high concept films filled Chinese theatres, most of them from Hollywood and several from domestic film studios. The high concept films are big budget, starred by famous actors, with splendid visual effect and thrilling storyline. This kind of highly entertained film genre was soon learned and borrowed by Chinese directors who had ambition in producing best-selling films. With investments from Hong Kong and overseas capitals, Chinese domestic-made big budget films have gained an increasing market share since 2004, more than half of the sales in national theaters belonging to Chinese blockbusters (Su 40). On the list of top ten highest-grossing films in Chinese market, seven of them are Chinese made with more than fifteen billion dollars’ sales in total. Directors like Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige who used to produce realistic films with profound social meanings turned their heads to making event films with heavy investment and famous stars. *The Promise* (2015) and *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006) unlocked the secret formula of producing domestic blockbusters.

However, the Chinese film industry can no longer be satisfied with enjoying marketable and profitable media productions, because the demand of promoting the Chinese image worldwide as a soft power compatible with the country’s current economic status and the thirst of going internationally by the state-owned and private production corporations in the profit-driven industry require Chinese media industry to seek for global influence. Hollywood blockbusters have in fact been far more effective in promoting China than China’s films based

on two reasons (Rosen 2011). The first reason is to promote the Chinese image around the world as the state's top priority for Chinese films, which heavily relies on Hollywood's global audiences who are stable and loyal and are willing to accept the ideologies that promoted in films. And the second reason is that Hollywood is also eager to make a deal with China due to its potential market and huge box office sales (*ibid*). Therefore, it is inevitable for Chinese film industry to collaborate with Hollywood as an important part of its marketization. The coopetition between the two film industries greatly influences the representation of China in co-produced films. An image of a Kung Fu country with mysterious spectacles and advanced skills/technologies is accepted and shared by audiences around the world, making Chinese representation as a cultural pastiche of Chinese cultural markers and Hollywood's aesthetics and genres.

Among Chinese filmmakers who want to produce global hits, there is a consensus that contemporary Chinese filmmakers must rely on their Hollywood counterpart to stand firmly in the global market, decreasing misunderstandings due to cultural alienation. According to Zhang Yimou, the director of *Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers* and *The Great Wall*, "the way the market is right now, we (Chinese filmmakers) can't make an internationally successful film on our own.... If we didn't have Matt Damon, if we didn't speak English in the film, then it would just be a purely Chinese film" (Qin, 2017).

A successful example of multiple collaboration is *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000), co-produced by companies from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Hollywood. It was produced mostly by Chinese talents, yet it took up Hollywood's tastes rather than following a traditional Chinese aesthetics of wuxia cinema. Here I compare Ang Lee's auteur with the style of Hong Kong wuxia films. The latter was flourished in Hong Kong in the 1960s,

mainly produced by Shaw Brothers and Cathay, promoting nationalism and heroism in realist portrayal, whereas Ang Lee's wuxia film is an evocation of Orientalism, exemplified the success of transnational production in Hollywood's style (Teo 13). The spectacle in *Crouching Tiger*, presented through a setting in a "distant land of an imaginary China", demonstrates that the "premodern China's exotic landscape and martial arts are stereotypical images of Chineseness that travel in shared culture and visual domains transnationally" (Szeto 54). The ambiguous landscape in the film can be transplanted to the vast land of Western America, filled with the horse-chasing and romantic nudity scenes familiar to Western audiences (*ibid*).

Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) and other following martial art films, also imitates *Crouching Tiger*'s aesthetic condensation of Chinese culture into spectacles, and further simplifies the martial arts into symbolic actions with the help of computing processes and fast cutting, providing merely visual wonders instead of a more profound Chinese warrior culture. Therefore, Ang Lee's and Yimou Zhang's wuxia films represent "a triumph of globalization" when they surrender to Hollywood production standards and "testify [to] the triumph of the Hollywood-style commercial mode of film production in China", leaving Chinese representations as hybridized cultural pastiche (Su, 142; Szeto, 54).

Domestic filmmakers also borrow the popular genre of Hollywood blockbusters. Although the established formulas of fantasy and sci-fi genres are always technology demanding and capital consuming, an increasing number of made-in-China fantasies and sci-fis with elements of Kung Fu, ancient fairy tales, and hyper-advanced skills have been produced by transnational media conglomerates who hold abundant capital and master high technology in film production and post-production. For example, the highest-grossing big-budget in China so far is *The Mermaid* (2016), which is a modern romantic fantasy of a historic legend remake. And

Monster Hunter (2015)'s domestic box office surpassed Hollywood's global blockbusters *Furious 7* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, showing that Chinese filmmakers are fully capable of producing 3D fantasy/action/adventure film.

Borrowing the successful experiences, the China Film Group (CFG, latter called China Film Group Corporation) collected sources from the top levels of the industry, got sponsored from the government, and built up an A-list team, to shoot the first high concept main melody film in 2009. *The Founding of a Republic* is a main-stream film to celebrate the birth of the People's Republic of China, packaged by film stars, high concept values and large production expenses. This film portrays positive images of the Party, in a patriotic, politically correct and highly marketable way (the highest sale for domestic film with more than 400 million yuan in 2009 (Hai)). This film breaks a path for main melody pictures, and its following series, *The Founding of a Party* (2011) and *The Founding of an Army* (in production) are both films honoring commercialized ideologies, showing "reconcile revolutionary propaganda and market-oriented movies and to rejuvenate the worn-out [blockbusters]" (Davis 205).

The changing cultural strategies and industrial adjustment, however, led to ambiguous cultural policies. To maintain the supremacy of the Party, both local and foreign films are all subjected to heavy-handed control and censorship; furthermore, the free market is enslaved to the state-crafted economy, consumerism is influenced by absolute authority, and propaganda consumes top resources, leaving limited creative space for domestic art films and commercial films. Therefore, Chinese film industry shares the same economic and creative pressure with their Hollywood counterpart in the Chinese market. When Hollywood finds that the interests of Chinese government and the market "often diverge", it seeks access to the market by collaborating with Chinese film production companies (Wan and Kraus 420). Meanwhile, since

more private Chinese film companies are allowed in the game, it is a short-cut to collaborate with Hollywood giants to acquire new technologies and adapt to the competitive environment.

In addition to the state-holding enterprise like the China Film Group Corporation, private media giants in China, such as Wanda Group, Huayi Brothers, and Bona Film Group Limited have stretched across borders to cooperate transnationally with foreign business. All three media conglomerates own from several to dozens of subsidiary corporations, covering all necessary links of film making, which guarantees profits from each procedure and control through vertical integration. It sounds familiar because that is exactly what Hollywood studios did in the golden age during from the 1920s to 1960s. However, Hollywood's very success nowadays lies in converting an overall producing enterprise to assigned tasks operated by independent contractors.

Despite the censorship like the sword of Damocles hanging above, today's Chinese media conglomerates look like and act like Hollywood giants in its 1940s, when loads of films are waiting to be produced, large share of the market is expected to seize, and great amount of hot money is invested in massive production. Today's Hollywood is seeking collaboration with these Chinese partners, just like the "old self" meeting with the "young self", feeling intimately though thinking differently. Huayi Brothers Pictures LLC. signed cooperation contract with American STX Entertainment, co-producing 18 films before the end of 2017 (Graser and Lang). The cooperation includes joint investment, shooting, and distribution in both countries. Hunan TV & Broadcast plans to joint venture with Lionsgate Entertainment Company on 50 blockbusters, an investment of total 1.5 billion dollars in the future three years. The reckless Wang Jianlin, the CEO of Wanda Group, shows the most ambitious plan, to build Qingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis as the world's biggest media studio, which is created to "capitalize on the deconstruction of the Hollywood business model" (Shih and Henry 49). Wanda Group's

expansion, no matter successful in the future or not, represents the ambition of Chinese filmmakers, that is, to build a Hollywood-like Chinese film industry instead of being a good partner with it.

Marketization with Chinese characteristic is partly different from the market economy in western context. The latter guarantees all parties enter and compete on a “level playing field”, and it is free as for the capital invested in it (Davis 219). For the case in China, the marketization of domestic film industry has created an ever-integrated media giant, absorbing most of the privileges from the market and the regulation, leaving limited space for outsiders, including those from Hollywood. Hence, Hollywood is seeking to collaborate with Chinese partners for a larger share of the market, turning itself from an outsider to a half-insider. Serving the state’s interests, Chinese film industry also shoulders responsibilities to promote China to the world, a task that can’t be done only by the domestic filmmakers themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for Chinese media conglomerates to collaborate with Hollywood’s counterparts due to the overlapped interests in both Chinese and global markets. With censorship system functioning as leverage power over Sino-Hollywood coopetition, three entities together build up a spectrum that covers and regulates all the industrial practices and outcomes between China and the United States. Being the products of such collaborations, the Chinese representations are portrayed as both China-friendly and market-friendly based on a mixture relation between cultural markers and market building.

3 CASE STUDIES

As discussed in the previous chapter, Sino-Hollywood collaboration in film industry is urgent and inevitable. This kind of cinematic cooperation always featured by Chinese cultural elements, which, as concluded, are shaped by both domestic censorship and requirements from

the global market. Operating within the regulatory framework set by the authority, the global-local interplay of seizing the global power between two major media players altogether builds up a compromised cultural identity of China in these Sino-Hollywood joint ventures, which reflects a market-oriented strategy adopted by the multiple players, the encounter of Chinese nationalism with a global market system, and a shared cultural image of China accepted by the global audiences. This compromised representation of China not only avoids any sensitive portrayal that may go against the Chinese censorship but also combines Chinese elements with globally well-received concepts in Hollywood blockbusters to form into a cultural pastiche that caters for the global market and audiences around the world. What is needed to be pointed out is that, the genres, features and cultural elements in such co-produced films have already been proved successful in the context of global media, hence, the market and audiences around the world have been familiar with such portrayals. To be specific, the image of China, a Kung Fu country with strong scientific and economic power in modern society and with mysterious skills and mythological dragon tales in ancient era is widely accepted by both Chinese censorship and the global audience. In addition, anything that is politically correct can be added to the representation of modern China, taking a strong female character with a general spirit of humanity for example.

This chapter is going to verify such image of China in Sino-Hollywood co-produced blockbusters, adopted an integrated cultural-industrial methodology from Caldwell (2009) to reveal the industry's conversation on "off-screen media production work worlds" in addition to textual and format analysis of films (200). Centering on three films, *Iron Man 3* (2013), *The Martian* (2015) and *The Great Wall* (2016), respectively representing three major types of film cooperation between filmmakers from China and Hollywood, this chapter aims to identify how

individual practitioners from different agencies perform production practices so that Chinese representations in these three films are portrayed and reaffirmed as a shared cultural identity that is proved marketable though it is a compromised one simultaneously.

3.1 Methodology

To understand the reappearance of Chinese representations in Sino-Hollywood co-productions, a discourse analysis will center on three films, *Iron Man 3*, *The Martian* and *The Great Wall*, in this thesis. The reason I have chosen these three movies is that they respectively exemplify three kinds of Sino-Hollywood co-productions, which are, correspondingly, “Chinese style co-production,” “Faux-production,” and “Hollywood style co-production” (Kokas 70-76). The analysis of discourse is not reduced to an investigation of deconstructed word games, but will also study the formation of cinematic texture, how different institutions organize the process of production, and how the three films correlate to their varied trade agreements. This chapter also identifies specific industrial conversations, investigate various promotion and distribution strategies, and, most importantly, the individual production cultures that shape all facets of the co-productions and film collaborations. In general, the method aims to take the media industries and the discourse they generated into account, which are often ignored by cultural studies-oriented approaches, and to combine film “theory” and film “work” (Caldwell, 2008, 7).

By collecting and interrogating trade publications, interviews of creators, press releases, and film texts, this chapter foregrounds on the industrial discourses around the planning, producing, distributing and marketing of transnational blockbusters, to decode a “self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection” media production process, and to connect each character or representation in these films with the specific mechanism, which reflects and assembles different aspects of the shared cultural identity of China (Caldwell, 2009, 201).

To get thorough access to the industrial conversations, every link in the industrial structure and is indispensable for understanding the full gamut of it. The dynamic power relation is labeled by cultural studies, yet it is embodied through various industrial policies and practices, performed by industrial workers who act as both creators and receivers. Every shooting site provides a spectacle for anyone witnessing it. Just outside the designed camera aperture, film personnel “form a preliminary audience in the production process” (Martin 63). The immediate audience group and the filmmakers are highly coincident on site. Therefore, decisions about how particular scene is shot and how individual character is performed can’t be executed before the production, but are shaped during the production process. These below or above the line film creators like the first-hand audiences interpret the imagery that reflects to them, as a part of the self-reflective mechanism of the film industry. Especially in the three selected co-produced, film personnel from the East and the West project the international audiences, which, in turn, contribute to the formation of the single prevailing cultural representation shared by the world.

To be specific, carefully analyzing the texts and contexts of the three modes of co-production helps to analyze the discourses of the selected films. China-International Film Co-Production Handbook, jointly issued by the China Film Co-Production Corporation (CFCC) and the Motion Picture Association (MPA) regulates the standards and principles of each mode. These three modes of co-production attest to the current media collaboration between China and Hollywood, indicating how dynamic participation from the two parties brings about the negotiations during the whole process of film co-production. For example, the varied promotional strategies in the Chinese market and the United States are due to different political and commercial demands. Therefore, it is reasonable to collect the trade news covering the initial creation, pre-production, post production, distribution and promotion of the three films. A wide

range of sources will be collected from film trade publications to analyze transnational collaborations, both from the United States and China, such as *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* telling the story from the context of Hollywood, and *Entgroup* and *Mtime*, website portals for Chinese cultural industry. Since the blooming Chinese market calls attention to American professionals, the same situation happens to Chinese scholars and practitioners in the film industry. It is necessary to learn the coin from two sides simultaneously, that is, to be informed on a single issue from two different sides in order to know how the leverage functions in-between during the completion and collaboration.

It is also important to know the feedback from different markets. The same film may receive distinct reactions due to the diverse aesthetic appreciations, promotion strategies, critical reviews, favored policies and other individual factors. To connect the market behaviors and the nature of the media practices is fundamental for the analysis of how cultural manifestation serves for the business rather than cultural or political pursuit. For example, *Warcraft* as a Chinese-invested Hollywood tentpole film won in Chinese market yet lost in American box office, although critical reviews from both countries were negative.

This multifaceted methodology is also adopted by John Caldwell in his methodological book (2008), *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. He advocates the study of critical industrial practices, and to treat film (and TV) industries as important sites of cultural meaning. This multi-facet method enriches one's understanding of media texts on production and reception.

In his book, Caldwell focuses on media labors in LA's film and television industries, examining how these workers reflect their individual production culture in a larger industrial context through extensive interviews and access to rich resources. For him, production cultures

are “far too messy, vast, and contested to provide a unified code,” therefore, his method, though including various research approaches, is in fact “closer to the ground” by seeking the “industrial masonry, cultural textures, and social mortar” centering the industry (Caldwell, 2008, 36). He believes the background stories behind the industry are as important to the industrial workers as to the audiences. He recognizes the production of culture within the industry, and he embraces the production process as an ever-changing source of media studies.

Represented by Caldwell (2008), Julie D’Acci (1994), Mayer Vicki (2009) and other scholars all devoted to critical media industry studies. By foregrounding the status of creative industries as the culture, media production research articulates questions of media labor and institutional context in a dialogue with debates about identity, meaning and representation. Derek Johnson alerts us to the danger that paying too much attention to industrial analysis may have “the tendency to treat media industry insularly, artificially cordoning off its work cultures from the realm of consumption and the micro-politics of everyday life extending to that realm” (Johnson 50). Therefore, it is important to look beyond the inside world of the industry and to examine how discourses outside the industry, such as cultural studies and political economy, have shaped or been shaped by the production culture.

3.2 Three Types of Film Cooperation Between China and Hollywood

Based on the regulations set by SAPPRT, three types of co-produced film are allowed shooting in China, which are co-produced, assisted and entrusted, and, among them, only the co-production films enjoy the favored policies, including exempting from imported film quota and sharing as high as 43% after-tax tickets sales.² In order to meet the minimum standards of approved co-production, the co-produced film should be jointly invested by Chinese (no less

² China-International Film Co-Production Handbook, 2014, 2-3.

than 20%) and foreign parties, who will share the copyright of the film and take the risk of the project, and should feature Chinese culture elements prominently with at least one-third of Chinese characters.³ Despite the written principles, the demand of “featuring Chinese elements prominently” is rather vague for filmmakers to understand, just like other censorship regulations implemented by the Chinese government, which empowers the authority to control more flexible.

Chinese authority endeavors to take advantage of long-term cultural influence and global cultural power from this kind of co-productions. Filmmakers from two sides are driven by market incentives, in contrast to the state’s political and cultural purposes. For Hollywood producers, the most direct way to benefit more from Chinese market is to co-produce films with Chinese partners. However, the films they sent for approval in some cases fail to meet the minimum standards according to Chinese government although they intend to regard their films as qualified co-productions (Miller et al. 83-87). The reasons are complex, and one of them originates from the different definition of film co-production in the United States which causes such confusing scenarios. Another reason is that partners from Hollywood may be reluctant to sacrifice its economic concerns for larger global market to cater for the strict standards although they are usually pandering to the second-biggest market.

According to Aynne Kokas (2017), she classified the film collaboration between China and Hollywood in several types, including co-production in Chinese style, co-production in Hollywood style, faux-productions, assisted productions, talent exchanges, commissioned productions, and buyout films (70-81). According to her description, co-production in Chinese

³ “Structuring a Sino-Foreign Co-production”, *Chinawood Society*,
<http://www.chinahollywood.org/about-co-productions>.

style is the film co-production officially approved by Chinese institutions and regarded as domestic-made, enjoying higher revenue share and bypassing imported quota (Kokas 70-71). Faux-coproduction, or “fake co-production” in this thesis,⁴ is a type of film collaboration that attempts to apply for co-production approval before or during the filmmaking but is eventually distributed as a foreign imported (Kokas 74-76). Different from the co-production in Hollywood style defined in Kokas’ book, which encompasses general co-ventures and official co-production, this thesis resorts to a more detailed defined concept in *Global Hollywood*, equity co-production, a “non-treaty” production mode where “international partners find economic and cultural benefits in sharing resources”, and they “hold equity” in ownership and creative decision (Miller et al. 83-87; Kokas 71-74). However, in specific example of equity production between China and Hollywood, the chances of sharing equity in ownership and the creative decision may vary differently, which will be further discussed later.

These three kinds of film collaboration will be emphasized in this thesis because most filmmakers in two countries who aim at exploiting favored Chinese media policies on co-ventures will concentrate on these three kinds that may bring larger revenue share, more intensive cooperation, greater capital investment and wider market access. Also, these three types are most often associated with various forms of Chinese representations because film productions that belong to these three kinds are more likely contained Chinese characters and representations of China as a short-cut to meet the standards.

⁴ The name “fake co-production” is used in several occasions including Weiying Peng’s journal paper, “Sino-US film coproduction: A global media primer”, Clifford Coonan’s industrial press on Variety, “China Smokes Out ‘Fake’ Co-Productions” (<http://variety.com/2013/more/global/china-smokes-out-fake-co-productions-1200406315/>), and Elena Meyer-Clement’s book, *Party Hegemony and Entrepreneurial Power in China: Institutional Change in the Film and Music Industries* (p. 105).

The rest kinds of film collaboration may be mentioned in the case study section. However, they will not be emphatically introduced here because, first, the Chinese locations and Chinese characters in cooperative productions like talent exchange and assisted production may “not portrayed as ‘China’”. Second, commissioned productions and buyout films don’t necessarily contain Chinese characters or representations due to different market strategies.

The first kind of film cooperation discussed in this thesis is fake co-production, operating similarly with official co-production but denied by the regulators for certain reasons. Fake co-productions are films that are co-produced at least part of the production process, but they are distributed as imports to the Chinese market in the end. Big-budget blockbusters classified as fake co-productions are embedded with a certain amount of, but not enough, Chinese characters and cultural elements according to SAPPFT. It is possible for a foreign production shooting a scene in Shanghai and creating a role with several lines for Fan Bingbing to pass the government’s review as a 25% revenue-share imported film. However, it is not enough for a co-production that is required by the authority to highlight Chinese culture to provide merely a five-minute extra scene exclusively in Chinese theatres starred by local actors. Money matters in this competition of being the final co-production champion, yet, Hollywood studios should remember that the race itself is supervised by Chinese authority, and no one can bypass it. After the signing of the Sino-US Memorandum of Understanding in 2012, more favored policies have attracted foreign filmmakers’ further exploration to the second-largest market, despite the vague descriptions of censorship system. Films like *The Expendables 2* (2012), *Looper* (2012), *Iron Man 3* (2013) and *Transformer: Age of Extinction* (2014) are unsuccessful examples of testing the bottom lines of co-production in China. The fake co-production demonstrates the negotiation between Sino-Foreign stakeholders and official executives over Chinese cultural policies. From

Iron Man 3 to *Transformer 4*, an increased importance of Chinese characters indicates Hollywood filmmakers' constant groping for the sweet spot of Chinese regulators to authorize a fake co-production to be a real co-production.

The second one is "equity co-production" between Chinese and Hollywood filmmakers. However, the Sino-Hollywood co-ventures are different from the Hollywood-EU ones introduced in Toby Miller's book because Chinese partners usually don't participate in film creation although they hold equity in distribution or sometimes in ownership. This type of cooperation limits to the level of foreign investment and distribution, and the film it produced is not, nor intends to be, labeled as official co-production, because the foreign party involved will not participate in the creation process, but only take charge of overseas distribution and enjoy global box office share. From the 1990s before China's entry in WTO, Hollywood studios intended to financially invest in indigenous filmmaking and its global distribution to access market when the co-production was not so strongly promoted like today. For example, Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia invested *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000) and *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004), and another division of its parental company, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, managed the distribution within the United States. With the growing power of Chinese transnational conglomerates, an increasing number of Hollywood films get invested and distributed from its Chinese partners. For example, Bona Film Group Limited. Collaborates with 20 Century Fox with a deal of \$235 million in a slate of blockbusters through the investment of TSG Entertainment Finance, including the big-hit *The Martian* (2015) (Frater). Wanda Group also heavily invested in The Weinstein Company's *Southpaw* (2015) with \$30 million, which is the first Hollywood film financially sponsored by Chinese investor, and managed the domestic distribution as a buyout film screened a year later (Zixuan and Jing). Since Huayi Brothers has

built their own theater chain in China, it reveals its investment plan with STX Entertainment in no less than 18 tentpoles, including a sci-fi product, *The Space Between Us* (2017), screened in line with American theatres (Frater). Compared with *The Martian*, the other two examples don't contain Chinese elements at all, seemingly less possible to pass through the film quota than those co-produced films with highlighted Chinese elements. Official mouthpiece *China Daily* regards this kind of oversea investment as valuable chances for Chinese filmmakers to learn from Hollywood's advanced techniques and experiences of filmmaking, as a method to enhance the industry's soft power (Li). "Hollywood made" weights over "Chinese representations" in such film productions. The foreign capitals help American studios reduce financial risk of their would-be blockbusters aiming at global market. Meanwhile, they offer a business opportunity for foreign investors to cash in on global revenue proportion, and Chinese filmmakers also can study the highly-industrialized filmmaking from their experienced partners. In the future, this kind of film collaboration will continue to increase, grounded in the growing ambition of pursuing global power by these Chinese media giants.

The third but the most important type is official co-production (namely co-production in the following text). As introduced before, co-production films can exempt the film quota, distributed as homemade, and Hollywood's co-producer can enjoy a 43% after-tax revenue. For example, *Iron Man 3* collected \$121 million dollars in China, and Marvel Studio earned \$30 million revenue share, compared with its American box office of \$ 409 million; however, if entitled as co-production, almost \$ 25 million more would be in Marvel's pocket.⁵ Easy money usually won't be easily made. According to SAPPRFT, all foreign filmmakers seeking to shoot films in China, whether it is a co-produced or assisted, must operate under an over-all monitoring

⁵ Box office data collected from Box Office Mojo, and calculated by the thesis author.

by the related institutions. For the intended co-production project, every section of filmmaking in each shooting process, from script writing and characters casting to site building and choosing, should apply for consent from SAPPRFT first during the pre-production, production and exhibition, and it is required to get “The Chinese-Foreign Film Coproduction Permit” before shooting locally, and another “The Film Public Exhibition Permit” for screening legally.⁶ The censorship system forbids everything relevant to sex and violence, sensitive political and religious issues, and partly concerning supernatural and afterlife in all films that shall be screened domestically, and all films with images and representations that vilify China or Chinese government shall be banned, regardless of homemade, imported, or co-produced. Cutting plot or totally banned usually happens on finished foreign imported after it knocks on the door of China if the SAPPRFT detects any unsanctioned content. In contrast, the content-approval procedure is accompanying the whole shooting process, with an officer holding the script and examining every dialogue, and each small violation may directly lead to disqualification. It is said that one of the reasons that *Iron Man 3* failed to be authorized was because Marvel Studio refused to show the whole script to the regulator (Z. Wang). Therefore, although imported films “run a higher risk of being completely rejected”, co-produced films enjoy less freedom in creation and production (Kokas 71).

3.3 The Discourse Analysis of Three Films

Three films, *Iron Man 3*, *The Martian*, and *The Great Wall*, are mainly analyzed as examples of three modes of film collaboration respectively, along with discursive analysis on several other films supporting the argument. The Chinese presentations in Sino-Hollywood

⁶ Such information collected from two official websites on Sino foreign film co-productions: <http://www.cfcc-film.com.cn/introeg/busine.html> and <http://www.chinahollywood.org/about-co-productions>.

collaborations are hybridized cultural pastiches combining marketable elements, portraying China as a country with advanced technology and universal values with Kung Fu and strong females embedded in both modern and ancient times.

3.3.1 “Fake Roles” in Fake Co-Productions

Released on May 1st, 2013, *Iron Man 3* inherits the storyline from its previous two sequels, talking about Tony Stark, an American military contractor, whose alter ego is Iron Man, suffers terrorist attacks organized by Mandarin. In the exclusive version screened in China, his life is saved by a Chinese doctor through risky surgery and acupuncture, whereas in the international and American version, this international rescue is excised, lest causing any cognitive confusions to overseas audiences.

The film failed to be approved as a co-production when it was imported based on limited revenue share to China, although its Chinese associate production company DMG Entertainment promoted it as a co-production before the disappointed notice. Whether the producers from Marvel or DMG realized they could lose the 43% revenue share or not before the fake-coproduced film was “sentenced to death”, the market strategy throughout the whole production and promotion process remained clear, that is, to promote the Chinese elements and characters strategically. The promotional strategy aims at building up a misleading awareness and expectation for the Chinese actors and audiences through deliberately exaggerating the importance of Chinese characters and cultural elements in films. However, the actual outcome in such films is far less important than the image indicated by the rhetoric and video clips before the film release. Therefore, these exaggerated roles are “fake roles” in fake co-productions, and they are no more than selling points for film producers. Such strategy is the product of producers

seeking maximum box office sales when they realize that their films fail to be approved as co-produced.

It turns out that the third sequel of *Iron Man* is the most financially successful in the series, and its box office revenue ranks the fifth of all the superhero movies in history with more than \$400 million dollars, including the biggest foreign sale in China with more than \$100 million dollars.⁷ Though the Chinese exclusive content and illusory market promotion caused disputes and controversies, the successful sales demonstrate the compromises and consensus between film stakeholders and administrative bodies.

DMG Entertainment is a Beijing-based American film company, co-founded by Dan Mintz, Wu Bing, and Peter Xiao, distributing foreign films to China as start-up and co-producing national or transnational films both in China and the United States later, including the Chinese big-budget propaganda, *The Founding of a Republic* (2009). Before investing in the famous Marvel series, DMG had collaborated with Hollywood studios on several big budgets, including another fake co-production *Looper* (2012), a film also promoted as co-production before it got denied.

To associate the interviews, press release and industrial news with actual industrial practices, it is critical to understand that the content of conversations and the real actions are embedded in “historical contexts that establish and enact relations of power and resistance”, according to Thomas Streeters’s methodology borrowed from Foucauldian “discursive practices” (Streeter xii). Therefore, the talks and the actions may indicate the compromises and resistances over the power relation. In July before the film released in National Day holiday in 2012, DMG’s

⁷ Data collected from Box Office Mojo
<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=superhero.htm>.

CEO Dan Mintz promised that Chinese actress Xu Qing (Old Joe's wife in the film) as a color of beauty was highlighted in the black mob film filled with masculinity, and Shanghai was the center where main character lived in the future world. "We didn't take advantage of it to pander to the Chinese market, but the story really needs it to be. In fact, the Chinese factors make the story more interesting", according to Mr. Mintz in an interview (Yi). In fact, this film does pander to China because the director Rian Johnson admitted in another interview that he transplanted the location from Paris to Shanghai "to gain lucrative Chinese funding" (Pidd).

Implanting and promoting Chinese elements in films also bring assurances to Hollywood filmmakers to be favored by the problematic regulations and unpredictable market in China. The intentional promotion strategies are presented by exaggerating and highlighting the importance of Chinese characters and locations which are in fact less important than their western counterparts. Turns out that, Xu Qing's character lived in the memory of male character, almost speechless, along with seldom scenes of a sci-fi city that were hardly identified as Shanghai, because the major plot focused on today's world instead of the future. Despite it was merely a fake co-production, the Chinese character and the portrayal of modern Shanghai, an indication of the modern China, helped the film easily pass through the censorship. It gained a total \$20 million dollars' box office in the Chinese market, a remarkable result for an import film surrounded by domestic high concept films in the competitive October.

One year later, the same production and marketing strategies were adopted once again. This time, the implanted character was Dr. Wu, played by Wang Xueqi, an award-winning middle-aged actor, and the location was moved to Yongdingmen, Beijing. Wang was introduced to DMG by his boss, Fan Bingbing, a famous and beautiful actress who has been willing to act in foreign films for international fame. She also had a small part in *X-Men: Days of Future Past*

(2014), and was recently invited as the judge of Cannes Film Festival. Her popularity among domestic audiences is guaranteed. It seems that this cooperation between indigenous and Hollywood talents was based on mutual agreements. However, it was no more than an empty promise existing only on paper.

The seesaw battle within the upper administrative and political level has inevitably influenced the practices on the bottom level in the industry because cultural production in “post-socialist China” is “heavily bound to national cultural policies” (Su 10). Since this film is ultimately labeled as fake co-production as the product of the negotiation between filmmakers and regulators, it is inevitable for the Chinese characters playing “fake roles” in this film, no matter how promising the description can be.

Just like the strict regulation and influential supervision from regulators on industrial practices can’t immediately result in the acquirement of soft power of the state, so as Chinese characters or cultural elements can’t be fully portrayed as decisive factors in films merely simulated by favored policy or promotional strategy. Mr. Mintz’s exaggeration on Chinese plots represents what most filmmakers who try to take advantage of the favored policy of co-production think Chinese elements look like in films. The inserted plots and exclusive versions are easy-to-use alternatives for portraying complicated Chinese characters based on in-depth understanding of the culture, because the latter is too time-consuming and risky for Hollywood blockbuster, a kind of film that is often instantly produced to make profits by entertaining global audiences. The “fake roles” created by Hollywood filmmakers or even Chinese producers are catering for the Chinese stars’ eagerness to be internationally famous. Similarly, the “fake co-production” is also a unique industrial manifestation of Sino and Hollywood filmmakers to pander to the ambition of Chinese state who dreams to become a global media power in a

relatively short-term. The misleading that Chinese actor encounters when they are invited to play a “fake role” resembles the uncertainty that the authority has on how to borrow Hollywood global blockbusters to promote its own cultural identity.

Therefore, within the framework of regulation, fake co-production between Chinese and Hollywood filmmakers resembles a balance with weights of “going out” and “coming in” on two sides. It is inevitable to move back and forth to test the limits of censorship and the acceptance of Chinese elements from the global market. Once the desire of “going out” weights more than “coming in”, like the case of *Iron Man 3*, the “Chinese culture” shall be taken away from a heavier side; once the situation reverses, more Chinese cultural elements shall be added on the lighter side to keep balance. Therefore, the quantity and quality of representations of China depend on how eager of Hollywood studios coming to China and how powerful the creative right held by local filmmakers.

Wang was cautious to his role in *Iron Man 3* because the former unsuccessful examples of Chinese actors awkwardly appearing for several minutes were of less effect on plot development in films than pandering to the Chinese market. Valued his fame, he was reluctant to play a role only saying “Ni Hao” (“Hello” in English). However, Wang was assured that he was the doctor who saved Tony Stark’s life, according to an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter* (Tsui). There were several back and forth on whether to take the part, yet, Wang was attracted by the complexity (at least it planned to be) of the character, who is “a specialist in Chinese and Western medicine, but also a scientist and someone who has an in-depth knowledge of ancient Chinese culture”, making him believe this was not an implanted character, but one had lots of interactions with the leading roles (*ibid*). Although disguised by the cinematic name of “Nuan Long” (Warm Dragon in English), *Iron Man 3* was witnessed shooting in Yongdingmen, an

ancient iconic building in Beijing, with Iron man (a substitute of Downey in the armor) and Dr. Wu surrounded by a group of pupils with red scarfs, symbols of the Communist Party, on their necks (Mi). Although this scene was cut in the final version either in Chinese exclusive or international version, the idea pleased the officials who supervised the whole shooting process in China.

Similar to the marketing strategies of *Looper*, the scenes in Beijing and Wang's role were heavily promoted even on the day before the Opening Night. Despite careful decisions he made, Wang's Dr. Wu only appeared for two minutes in the Chinese exclusive extension version, no more than a "walk-in-and-walk-out" character, and he appeared only ten seconds in the international cut, which embarrassed Wang when he just proudly claimed he saved Iron Man by using acupuncture (a traditional medical skill with needles lasted for hundreds of years in China) on film's grand Beijing Premiere. Fan Bingbing even didn't show up to the premiere because her role was reduced and totally disappeared in the international version. Marvel studio deliberately advertised films exclusively to Chinese viewers even with scenes not included in final cuts. Domestic audiences strongly criticized Marvel for "scaling back" the screen time of Chinese actors, and the Chinese trailer containing Dr. Wu's part was blatantly misleading (Tsui). A sneak footage released three weeks before screening in Beijing with the iconic building Yongdingmen was also absent from final cut (*ibid*). In order to pacify Chinese audiences, Marvel promised to produce a short film with extra Chinese plot named *The Prologue*, yet the further details of release date or format were still unclear (Tsui).

Therefore, it can be easily understood why DMG untruthfully and exaggeratedly promoted Chinese elements in this film, which is because the actor/actress effect and the curious to see how Chinese saved Iron Man were the biggest eye-catching topics for Chinese audiences.

The potential selling point stimulates the creation of “fake roles”. It is possible that both DMG and Marvel Studio realized that *Iron Man* series could be hardly a co-production because neither the storytelling could be altered so much that it would lose the American market nor Marvel Studio was willing to ditch the Hollywood traditions for the Chinese market only. After all, Chinese market still can’t compete with the global market nor with the mature formula of superhero movies. Therefore, the “fake roles” can’t become “real roles” temporarily because the market incentives still mostly drive the creative decisions of Hollywood filmmakers. To promote it as co-production is focusing on rhetoric rather than substantial collaboration, because a co-production always means more Chinese cultural elements, which results in larger box office sales in China.

In the Chinese exclusive plot (or as Marvel planned in *The Prologue*), Dr. Wu being a physician skilled in traditional and mysterious Chinese acupuncture as well as western technologies can be somewhat related to the notorious Dr. Fu Manchu who is also good at science and master in chemical weapons with doctorate degrees. In contrast with Manchu’s scheme to overturn western world, Dr. Wu’s saving a western hero demonstrates Hollywood’s China-friendly strategy. Furthermore, Dr. Wu is a fictional character not originally from comic series, and it is created for the Chinese market only, comparing to Mandarin, who is a Chinese villain, an archenemy to Iron man (another Fu Manchu-like character), in original comics but portrayed as a transnational figure with blurred ethnicity and diverse iconographies in the film, to avoid offending any culture in any country. In fact, Mandarin is just a disguise of the real super evildoer, no more than a clown in the adaption (Couch). Both Mandarin and Dr. Wu can be classified as “fake roles” because they simultaneously belie their initial creative intentions, and they are products of a trade-off between political demands and market concerns. A modern

doctor with the medical skills of ancient China saving a western superhero can clearly serve both aims, and a super villain with Chinese heritage is absolutely not allowed. When a Chinese turns from a threat to a friend, he is welcomed by Hollywood and China, but not so much by the global market.

3.3.2 *Chinese (Females) Being Heroes/Heroines*

A Sino-Hollywood film collaboration, *The Martian* was released as one of the several tentpoles co-ventured between Bona Film Group Limited. and 20 Century Fox in 2015 in the wave of Chinese conglomerates going abroad in search of global cooperation. Being a revenue-share imported, *The Martian* swept off more than \$94 million dollars' sales in Chinese theatres, ranking only second to the American market. It is also a successful example for Sino-Hollywood "equity co-production", except Bona not involved in creative production (only owns domestic distribution rights and foreign box office shares).

When a strong dust storm forced the exploratory crew to evacuate from Mars, Mark Watney played by Matt Damon strayed from the team and was left alone on the planet. Although he struggled to survive by planting potatoes on Mars, his life was dangerously threatened unless his teammates could rescue him in time. After failed attempts by NASA, China National Space Administration (CNSA) assisted the rescue project at the expense of revealing its mysterious and advanced booster rocket, and ultimately helped the crew members save Mark from Mars.

In this film and Roland Emmerich's *2012* (2009), Chinese people are world savior, twice. Such plot settings in films are labeled as "Pander Express" by talk-show host Stephen Colbert, meaning that the plugged Chinese plot is helping Hollywood's blockbusters earning great profits (Hoad). It is too far-fetched to say *The Martian* inserts China National Space Administration as life savior of Matt Damon's character because that is the original plot in the namesake science

fiction novel. However, the description of “Pander Express” indicates the increasing number of cases that Hollywood film production not only performs self-censored by deleting or changing the “ugly” portrayal of China or Chinese characters (such as Mandarin in *Iron Man 3*) but also actively involves Chinese elements in film as a pandering policy for the market.

For Hollywood filmmakers, it is far safer to create a simple good Chinese than portraying a complicated one with both positive and negative thoughts, even they both lead to good results. In the original novel, when CNSA decided to abandon its space mission of Taiyang Shen (“God of the sun” in English) rocket booster, a secret advanced technology that China hid from the world, in exchange of the mission to save Matt Damon, the writer Andy Weir arranged a more complicated mental struggle for Zhu Tao (played by Chen Shu), the scientific director of CNSA, who concerned that “this operation is a net loss for mankind’s knowledge” because “China will not fund future CNSA missions of comparable scope” (Pak 112). In contrast, the film adapted this plot with simple, heroism spirits. In the film, the collaboration between Chinese and American space bureaus is based on pure humanity, and, of course, the advanced space craft technology held by China. Zhu shows less emotional concerns and conflicts than the portrayal in the novel. She simply weights the value of a single life more than that of a space mission since the first second. To avoid governmental interference, she even bypasses the two authorities like any anarchist in western culture would do and cooperates directly to NASA staffs who also value life more than scientific research. The change in plot highlights an ideal condition that probably only exists in the Hollywood-made film with salvation complex, in which the humanistic spirits shared by people from two nations, at the expense of changing the carefully-arranged and scientifically authentic plot in original novel.

Such civil cooperation is a fantasy-like plot that will never happen in reality, especially after the law passed by the Congress of the United States which banned any space technology sharing between the two countries (Dickerson). Out of political reason, *The Martian* was highly praised by Chinese authority. A senior Chinese space officer took this blockbuster as a “proof that Americans want to see the United States and China cooperate in space, but lamented Washington's ban on collaboration between the two countries” (Martina). Chinese authority and related administrations regard the film as a recognition of its increasing space capability by the American counterpart. Therefore, they wish to break the boundaries like what happens in the film and collaborate further with the International Space Station. Even the mouthpiece of the Party, *Global Times*, praises Matt Damon’s acting “is a joy to watch”, which is too rare to see, yet it also points out that “when Chinese actress Chen Shu's proud and melodious voice announced that their research will be NASA's only chance to save Watney, it came across as more of a joke than patriotic and the audience here in China couldn't help but laugh out loud” (Qianwen).

According to Zhihu, a Chinese version of Quora, the question of why audiences laughed so hard when they saw the plot with Chinese characters in *The Martian* were answered by more than three hundred people. Most of them agree that the real location of CASA in Beijing is not as grand and beautiful as that in the film because Chinese Department of Aerospace, being more a technological branch rather than an administrative one, is incapable of spending so much funding on decoration the building. The name of the rocket, Taiyang Shen (God of the Sun), is also criticized that Chinese authority would never use such a western-mythological name. However, such mistakes and make-ups break through the cultural alienation that often exists in Hollywood films for Chinese viewers because they can really participate in the plot discussions rather than

being outsiders of the western hero's journey in traditional global blockbusters. The Chinese agency saving an American white male also stimulates spirits of heroism and nationalism for Chinese audiences, which usually happens to western viewers when they watch military action big hits like *Top Gun* (1986) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998).

The film is proved to be financially and critically successful both in China and around the world, providing a new idea and formation for filmmakers who prefer to pander to Chinese government and audiences at the same time aim at the global market, that is, a Chinese master who appears from the last one third of the plot saving the world/a westerner with either mysterious skills like Kung Fu/acupuncture or advanced technology like rocket boosters. This character had better be a representation of China, rather than a role that audiences can remember name, it also had better be abstract and symbolic in character building because less in-depth description can be better understood by audiences, and it had better hold universal values promoted by global culture and behave like a western hero/heroine without questing its standpoint. For Hollywood filmmakers, such character can be a Chinese, an Asian, an African-American or even an alien, as long as it is necessary to cater for a particular market and political demands.

In fact, even the location shot in the film can be transplanted. The "Chinese Department of Aerospace" in the film is not in Beijing but Budapest, according to an interview with director Ridley Scott, because there are several buildings built in Soviet era, which are pretty much like buildings in China according to the film creators, and the river of Danube can pretend to be Yangtze River in southeast China. Therefore, it is not necessary to shoot in China for Chinese elements as long as the replaced locations and cultures are accepted by global audiences that

these are authentic ones. Out of economic concerns, it is also cheaper and more convenient to shoot in Budapest because there would be more onerous bureaucracy if the film shot in China.

Although the censorship system functions to avoid anything that harms the image of the nation, the attitude of Chinese government indicates that any description that shows the strong modern China either in science or economy is welcomed regardless where and how it presents. Promoting a big, strong nation to as many places in the world as possible is a paramount part of enhancing soft power by the Chinese government, requiring, first, an image that is recognized by the authority, and second, the film that contains such images should be globally marketable. *The Martian* can somehow meet both requirements, and a representation of a scientifically strong China with universal humanity and heroism is proved to be politically acceptable and financially profitable in Chinese and the global markets.

This kind of equity co-production with Hollywood fully controlling creative decisions enjoys more freedom than the fake co-production, because the latter has to conduct under strict supervisions when it is still labeled as a co-production whereas the former can produce outside China under less control as long as it passes the censorship for imported films before the screening. However, fake co-productions and equity co-production share similarities in producing Chinese representations, which is, less than necessary to meet the standard of official co-production. One of the reasons why *Iron Man 3* and *Transformer 4* failed to be recognized as co-production is because they don't meet the standard of "heavily invested in Chinese culture" according to the President of China Film Co-Production Company (Pulver). And the mode of film production like *The Martian* takes Chinese representations as icing on the cake, that is, the cultural elements are served for passing the film quota and attracting audiences while the filmmakers still weights global market over Chinese market so that they are not willing to

“heavily invest in Chinese culture” at the risk of losing global audiences. Therefore, the Chinese representations in such films are compromised in order to cater for the taste of larger audience group, and they are created with hybridized cultural identities that can be transplanted to any other images and symbols that are widely acknowledged as Chinese features, such as Kung Fu and anything related.

To conclude previous discussions, in cinematic texts and production, economic tensions usually outweigh aesthetic genius, that is to say, the arrangement of aesthetic features is dominated by economic concerns rather than artistic requirements, especially in Hollywood blockbusters aimed at the global market. The big-budget production and promotion costs should be guaranteed by familiarity and marketability in cinematic texts through retrieving past experiences that have been proved marketable and combining cultural and political standpoints that are widely acknowledged.

Total five blockbusters are co-invested by Bona and TSG, including *The Martian* (2015), and *Independence Day: Resurgence* (2016), in which two famous Chinese actresses, Chen Shu and Angelababy (Yang Ying), are participated. In the former, Chen Shu played a high-rank official in China National Space Administration, along with another male officer, played by Hong Kong veteran actor Eddy Ko. Although they appeared in the film for no more than three minutes, they made a decision that is decisive for China’s spaceship traveling across the space to save Matt Damon. In the latter film, also in a science fiction genre, Angelababy is a female Warcraft pilot who fights against alien intruders within seven minutes. Another Chinese female star, Zhang Jingchu, also took a small role in Sino-Hollywood co-ventured, *Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation* (2015), invested by China Movie Channel and Alibaba Pictures Group, her just-a-few-seconds performance was exaggerated to be a “major role opposite Tom

Cruise” in the promotion press during the pre-production (Frater). Since an increasing number of Chinese actresses appeared in Hollywood blockbusters that were associatively invested by Chinese film studios, whether their roles are important or not, they often present a strong and beautiful (at least in the Asian aesthetical standard) female character who processes dignity and heroism from western culture.

Comparing to their male counterpart, female Asian actresses are more easily frequently seen than male Asian actors in today’s Hollywood blockbusters, which originated from the Yellow Peril period when Asian females presented less threatening and more vulnerable to western masculinity, according to Gina Marchetti (Marchetti 12-14). According to the political economic approach, the consumption of industrial commodity ultimately feeds back to the production process, and the social change based on power relation shapes the industrial behaviors, which leads to the formation of a certain kind of cultural representation (Mosco 25). The fear that the oriental “other” would endanger Western values was rooted in this fallacy, projected via Hollywood’s visual images, serving as evidence of such social belief system. Dr. Fu Manchu enjoyed a long-term popularity from the 1910s to 1980s on big screen and other media platforms with an evolved image over time. In contrast, Asian female characters in traditional Hollywood romance, such as Suzie Wong in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), are often feminine outsiders who were dependent to their “white knights” starred by white male actors, and their Asian features are intentionally subdued by romantic plots. Due to the liberal ideology of the “melting pot” in today’s American society, an excessively negative depiction of a certain race is not politically correct, nor accepted by the audiences in most advanced countries. Hence, images like Dr. Fu Manchu is no more seen on big screens, in fact, not so much Asian roles can be found in today’s Hollywood’s blockbusters (Chong 30). However, when it is

necessary to add an Asian character or a Chinese one in such Sino-Hollywood co-ventures as part of pandering policy, it is ideal to insert a female character because she can be both powerful (due to the wide acceptance of feminism) and less threatening simultaneously. Chinese female actresses are also preferred to appear in Sino-Hollywood co-ventures because such films have no requirements on character building according to the regulations. Hence, they can act as “beautiful vase” that attract both domestic and foreign audiences. Therefore, it is safer to add a Chinese female for the global market whenever necessary for filmmakers to reduce economic risks.

3.3.3 *Kung Fu China in Co-Productions*

Through constantly testing the boundaries of Chinese censorship system, Hollywood studios have been groping a way for co-producing with Chinese filmmakers, enjoying as much creative freedom as possible, and meanwhile making most profits from the two major markets. Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000) is the first and most successful internationally co-produced film with an Oscar award and boosted box office sales in America. As concluded in the previous chapter, *Crouching Tiger* adapts elements from traditional Wuxia picture to a transcultural background that is familiar to American audiences. Spectacles of Chinese Kung Fu, connecting with wildness in the Western films, is proved to be a success in market and art. Ang Lee himself is also highly identified by the Academy and western film industry for his auteur, and his directing provides a mysterious, exotic charm yet the spectacles belong to western tastes.

Sino-Hollywood co-productions are strictly regulated and supervised by film institutions in China. The rigid standards of co-production, which requires no less than one-third of Chinese investments with domestic actors playing the leading roles and shooting scenes in China, limits

the creation of the story. Therefore, these co-productions are invested in Chinese culture, and they borrow popular elements from Hollywood as well. Films produced within this frame usually more or less refer to *Crouching Tiger*, covering predictable elements from this mixed Kung Fu film with new storytelling.

Jackie Chan's *The Karate Kid* (2010) (renamed as Kung Fu Dream in Chinese theaters) is a rebooted version of a 1984 Hollywood film, co-produced by Columbia Pictures and China Film Group. The film topped the American box office at the first opening weekend and gained a total \$176 million domestic sales, and its Chinese box office reached \$4.14 million dollars for the first week according to Box Office Mojo. The storyline is transplanted from Detroit to Beijing, telling a story of a martial art master (played by Jackie Chan) training an American kid (played by Jaden Smith) to defend himself from others. *The Karate Kid* is a financially successful adaption from a classic Hollywood film in both markets, proving the unchanged attraction of Kung Fu films, a popular film genre in the western world since the 1970s. It should be highlighted that, except Chan as the leading character, the film creators including director, producers and script writer are all from Hollywood, which ensures that the production process meets Hollywood's high standard, and guarantee the aesthetic style familiar to the global audiences who are used to Hollywoodized storytelling. However, a further analysis on Chinese representations shows that the modern China in a foreign kid's eyes is no more than a collection of the martial art, Beijing Hutong (alley), table tennis and the Great Wall. As the story develops, Jaden overcomes his weakness and defeats his enemies by learning a skill, which purely belongs to Americanized spirits of self-growth, yet, there lacks a plot development on how he gradually changes his view to China through understanding Chinese culture. All the Chinese characters are faded faces except Jackie Chan and his Kung Fu.

Chan's another co-production in 2008 with Jet Li, *The Forbidden Kingdom*, (renamed as Kung Fu King in Chinese release) is also a strong sale in the United States and China, collecting the costs within two weeks, and it is also produced by a full Hollywood creators. This film is a cultural pastiche of a classic ancient Chinese literature, Sun Wukong (known as Monkey King), New York's China Town, and a white guy saving a lost hero, and it is a collection of all the elements that are proved and expected to be profitable in both markets. The cinematic aesthetics, storytelling and artistic style of these two films are distinct from *Crouching Tiger*, yet, if only compares the production culture of these films, they all share similarities in casting actors with global fame, blending Chinese culture with western elements, manifesting Kung Fu in a transnational (transcultural) story. Being a fantasy/action film, the story centers on a white young guy who copies the hero's journey, growing from nobody to somebody, decorated by magical effects and time traveling. The Chinese representations in these pastiche works are compacted to a Kung Fu island with Americanized values of salvation, heroism and humanity whether it is in modern times or the ancient.

The market success of these two Kung Fu films once again proves that the film production originates more from economic incentives than artistic pursuits since reviewing grades for both films are around six on IMDb and Douban (a Chinese version of IMDb). It further indicates that within the frame of co-production regulations, a mature film creation formula has formed based on the production team, genre, casting, and plot arrangement. Therefore, in a fantasy/action/sci-fi co-production setting in ancient/modern China, superheroes/heroes/heroines, played by stars either from China or Hollywood, overcome obstacles and finally defeat the evilness in humans or monsters from another world, and the Chinese characters always guide the foreign ones in finding the virtues in themselves, decorated

by the martial arts, spectacles of iconic Chinese sceneries, advanced technologies and parables from ancient myth.

It seems that the commercially successful co-productions are all dominated by Hollywood filmmakers, and involvement of their Chinese partners more likely belong to marketing strategies. The reason was explained by John Woo's longtime partner and friend Terence Chang in 2011 during the Shanghai International Film Festival. He said:

“When I gave this script to American producers, they told me they didn't want so many Chinese people in there because American audiences wouldn't like it. I actually know what they wanted. They may film China's Great Wall, but what they want is to build a Great Wall to keep away aliens from another planet” (Rui).

A saying turned out to be a prophecy. The Sino-Hollywood co-production, *The Great Wall* (2016), as the biggest co-produced film ever shot exclusively in China, tells exactly a fantasy story of building Great Wall to fight against monsters. The country of “China” represented by an iconic landmark, transforms from modern days to an ancient time in Zhang Yimou’s film and has been regularly attacked by monsters named Taotie who are originated from ancient Chinese mythology. This Orc-like monster, is excessively greedy, threatening the livelihood of the whole Song Dynasty. Jing Tian’s female General Lin Mae, who leads a group of female warriors as one of the five elite army fighting monsters for decades, patrols on the Great Wall to defend the country. All the Generals are played by the A-list stars and idols in China, and Jing Tian is the only female, also the leading character to save China along with Matt Damon. The army is trained to fight monsters for years, but all their acrobatic performances, similar to Kung Fu movements, are more visually joy than practical use. Matt Damon played a mercenary warrior, who coveted the black powder produced by the Chinese army. Touched by

the Jing Tian's self-sacrifice and heroism, he regained humanity and decided to fight against the monsters along with the Chinese. Damon's character can't be classified as a typical whiter-washing role or a traditional white savior, although being the only white guy who saves the country may cause such kind of suspicion. Compared with the background information of other co-productions, Damon and his fellows' character rather like an inserted Western character in an Eastern film, not the other way around. However, despite surrounded by more than a dozen of Chinese film stars or idols, Matt Damon is still the only character portrayed with depth and plot twist, compared with other Chinese characters, who are "flawless paragons like cardboard cut-outs with no emotional dimension", including Jing Tian's heroine (Lee). One of the reasons that can explain why Chinese characters lack in-depth portrays is due to the English dialogue. In *The Forbidden Kingdom*, even the God of Chinese mythology speaks English in the film, which is criticized and mocked by Chinese viewers. The creators of *The Great Wall* tried to avoid this awkward situation, so that only Jing Tian, Andy Lau and Lu Han's characters can speak English because they've learned from a foreigner according to the plot. Although it is possible to make the whole film in Chinese dialogues, the global (mostly American) audiences may be reluctant to read subtitles. Because the foreignness and alienation brought by the subtitles to audiences may diverge them from emerging into the story, and the limitations for subtitles, such as no more than two lines at a time with 35 characters each line, make it harder to translate the original dialogue precisely, unable to convey the exact artistic conception of the original film (Shulevitz). Therefore, there is no way but to reduce dialogues of characters who only speak Chinese as little as possible, to the disadvantage of developing the characters.

In addition to the simple character depiction, the main theme of the film is humanity and salvation, elaborating in a simple dichotomy of good and bad, east and west, right and wrong,

brave and timid, honest and greed, which is so habitual that almost every Hollywood-made blockbuster can be concluded like this. The monsters serve as intruders instead of any other nations that constantly combated with ancient China in history, avoiding any cultural or political sensitivity to any nation, which is another cultural policy carried out by Hollywood studios. Special effects of not only monsters but also exotic Chinese locations reminds audiences of the epic *Lord of the Rings* trilogy or other fantasy films with mysterious charming. Very quick explanation of background information pluses very tedious fighting are created by massive Chinese figurant and Industrial Light & Magic team (Dillon 20). The excessive arrangement of colors and sound typifies Director Zhang's auteur, just like what he did in the opening ceremony of Beijing Olympics in 2008. All these above combined altogether bring a non-stop glut of spectacles, a pastiche of ancient Chinese culture and Kung Fu actions with western fantasy that audiences have already familiar with in blockbusters like *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* and *The Forbidden Kingdom*. The *deja vu* will always come to their minds whenever they re-watch *The Great Wall*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Pacific Rim*.

Based on the textual analysis, the Chinses representation in this film, like the reduplicated image that appears in previous two case studies, is a Kung Fu country with advanced weaponry, honoring the heroism and believing in that evil can never prevail over good. Furthermore, there is no more political correctness than a white male is saved and educated by an Asian female, which also appears in Zhang Yimou's homemade big hit *The Flowers of War* (2011), praised by President Xi (Wong). This kind of replication of the representation of China is the product of the leveraging game among multiple players in film production.

From the perspective of industrial culture, the mode of co-production foregrounds the intersected interests of all parties involved. The changing relations among players can shift the dynamics of holding the creative rights in film production. It sometimes lets money talk. The production plan of *The Great Wall* was initiated by Legendary Entertainment in 2011, just after Legendary East was built in Hong Kong, aiming at expanding to the Chinese market. The story was initially created by CEO Thomas Tull and Max Brooks, and later written by director Edward Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz. The cast included new Superman, Henry Cavill. And the first Chinese partner was Huayi Brothers, who participated as a pure financial investor. However, when Le Vision Pictures and China Film Group started to take a piece of pie in this project, and most significantly, when Legendary Entertainment was overall purchased by Wanda Group at the beginning of 2016, the adjustment of power relations among investors and creators leads to the changes of filmmakers. Zhang Yimou, who earned fame by his early independent films and the great Olympic show in 2008 and has been working for Le Vision Pictures, for this reason he replaced Edward Zwick thanks to his employment company's large share of investment in filmmaking (Lee). Because of the big hit *The Martian* in China, Matt Damon is widely known both domestic and overseas, replacing "superman" to play the male leading character. According to the minimum standard of at least one third Chinese characters in one co-production, Zhang invited as much as possible Chinese media stars to join in this film, not only to meet the requirement but also aiming to attract massive fans of all age levels, according to his interview with *Southern Weekly*.

It sometimes lets the market talk. The back-and-forth struggles among regulations, market incentives and art are concluded as "walking with two legs" by Zhang who is willing to do both two right (Coonan). However, negotiations over the creative rights of representation

reflect market incentives matter more than aesthetic genius in the Sino-Hollywood co-production. Zhang honestly claimed in a recent interview with *Southern Weekly* that there was no space for so many Chinese actors to portray roles with deep meanings within such a smidgen of time, and he preferred the opportunity to go in the world rather than really producing a good film. His concerns are reasonable. In this circumstance, Hollywood's experiences on global market overweighs Zhang's pursuit of artistic presenting of ancient Chinese culture. Zhang Yimou's influences on filmmaking as the chief director was limited by other Hollywood talents in the creative team. In the letter he wrote to an artist, Zhao Muiyang, who solemnly played drums in a funeral plot during the middle of the film, Zhang was sorry that he failed to preserve more shots of Zhao in the film because "Americans" own the final cut right.⁸ The scriptwriters, Carlo Bernard, Doug Miro, and Tony Gilroy, based on Brooks' story, are basically westerners writing stories about China, which ensures Hollywoodized storytelling on the one hand, yet causes a mixed cultural pastiche on the other. Presented by the finished story, Zhang Yimou had his own limited creative space to add cultural elements that best reflect ancient China yet not too hard to be understood by foreign audiences. For example, he added a funeral scene when General Shao died of attack from a monster. However, since he didn't have more power other than on-site directing, his creation may sometimes be misinterpreted or reorganized by the creators from other departments. For example, the detailed arrangement of the color for each branch of an army was interrupted by the "rapid-fire editing" by Mary Jo Markey from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and Craig Wood from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, who worked following the aesthetics

⁸ Information comes from Zhao Muiyang's Sina Weibo (a Chinese version of Twitter) on December 16, 2016, http://weibo.com/1974245293/Emnnblubf?from=page_1005051974245293_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1500883742515.

of Hollywood-made. The reckless interpretation of Zhang's artistic expression is because of the absolute power of editing by these two professionals from Hollywood, and they are not only creating as filmmakers, but also re-understanding as viewers. As in the profit-driven industry, the decisive power comes from the one who understands and controls the market, which, in this case, is filmmakers from Hollywood. Therefore, the Chinese elements in this film are compromised due to the different interpretations from Hollywood talents who are targeting the global market.

The film collaboration between China and Hollywood has shown its increasing growth rate. However, it is far from secure to say that Sino-Hollywood co-production has reached a harmonious balance under the strict censorship system, has explored an ever-victorious mode of creation that guarantees the high box office revenue or has been widely received by global audiences, especially those from the first and second biggest markets. The image of China and Chinese culture presented in Sino-Hollywood film co-ventures is the result of the dynamic power play among multiple players. It presents a globally shared cultural identity that is proved profitable in the global market, and is received as a normal representation of China by audiences and filmmakers around the world. By constantly getting reaffirmation from the audiences (which is revealed by the box office sales), Chinese and Hollywood filmmakers re-adapt such image into new storytelling, and re-interpret it with emerging popular elements, to replicate a China, a Kung Fu country that can be either mysterious or realistic according to creative demands, a country that is strong in science and economy and sticking to the Americanized value system.

The three modes of film collaboration mainly discussed in this chapter are fluid, which means that one can change into another type due to the varied dynamic relation among different powers including Chinese regulators and transnational filmmakers in China and Hollywood.

They all subject to regulations and cultural policies; however, the power interplay between film stakeholders defines what constitute a Chinese representation and how to make it for the global market. The overlapped interests shared from the two entwined film industries not only contribute to the expansion of Hollywood's reach to China but also cultivate China as rising global media power that is going to cooperate and compete with it on the global stage.

4 BRANDING CHINA AS A GLOBAL MEDIA POWER

According to previous two chapters, practices and activities in Chinese film industry are shaped by the goal of private capital of local media sector, regulations served for state's interests, and the expansion of international capitalism in the cooperative and competitive interplay, which generates a shared cultural identity of China portrayed and displayed in transnational cinema for global market. A media imagery of China and Chinese culture identifies with the dominant value that is established in the context of globalization is encouraged in the Sino-Hollywood blockbusters.

In the dynamic global-local interplay, Chinese transnational conglomerates have manifested strong financial strength through enormous investment to its counterparts across the sea, and the state apparatus has shown its critical control of the domestic market by using censorship and restrictions as leveraging power. With international metropolis like Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, serving as national entertainment, business and political center, the government is heading to becoming the next superpower in global culture, even though there are still contradictions to be solved.

Micheal Curtin (2003) developed a concept as media capital to define the cities that are absorbing media resources and transporting media products globally, such as Mumbai in India and Hong Kong in China. However, Beijing is not a traditional "media capital", but rather is a

center of a multi-polar cultural community with Shanghai, Hong Kong, Qingdao and Hengdian mapping out diverse spheres of media practices, aiming at branding and promoting China and Chinese culture to audiences worldwide. A Hollywood-like cultural aggregates “Chinawood” is built by Chinese authority based on this national cultural community, and it sets its sight on higher goal of being a global media power as part of soft power strategy by the Chinese Communist Party. Other than media capitals like Mumbai, Seoul or Rio de Janeiro, whose cultural relevance may not be limited to geography, interests or policies of a single nation or state, the centralized state institutions and Party-controlled ideology in China distinguish Beijing-centered cultural community and its domestic film industry from their counterparts.

Tight regulation and censorship limit the creative space for Chinese national film production, therefore they have a minor impact on the world circulation. However, relatively favored policy from the authority in urgent need of strengthening soft power and abundant private capitals from profit-driven transnational conglomerates provide a short-cut for the industry to go global, to “borrow a ship and sail across the sea”, that is, to cooperate with Hollywood to promote films about China in a short term, in exchange for a long-term reform on content making and aesthetics cultivation within the film industry (Su 2, 75). To borrow a ship instead of building one will inevitably lead to the delayed development of one’s own shipbuilding technology. In the shift of domestic media industry adapting itself to the risky and competitive environment in the era of globalization, an international media entity instead of a regional one will be established not by outputting indigenous content reflecting local culture but to adapt it to a global-hit formula based on Hollywood’s mature aesthetics, sacrificing the chances of producing its own world-class national films. Catering to both culturally relevant and irrelevant audiences, the brand of China will be promoted as a global media power on a platform

of “Chinawood”, rather than niche viewers gravitating to local media capital. With a growing Chinese market advantageous to both parties, the goal of creating a new global media power is built on the capital operation instead of content creation, that is, to build the “hard infrastructure” instead of enhancing the “soft infrastructure”.

4.1 Curtin on Media Capital

Michael Curtin (2003) developed media capital, a dynamic concept that breaks through the national boundaries, provides approaches to discover multi-directional media flows, and to explain the spatial complexity of global media (202). Media products, represented by television programs, are transcending frontiers, and are transported via multi-directional media flows instead of a conventional one-way trip from US’s dominant programming to local areas. Cities are radiating such flows and having been centers of financing, producing and distributing of media products. They can be labeled as media capitals, taking Hong Kong, Mumbai, and Chicago for example. Media capitals don’t necessarily answer for the geography, interests or policies of the individual state, but they are usually attracting electronic landscapes of “geo-linguistic regions” on media migration, interaction and communication (Huang 181). Therefore, Curtin (2003) concludes a media capital as “a nexus or switching point, rather than a container”, with its status that can be “won and lost”, and believes that a city that grows to be a media capital is influenced by social and cultural forces, the patterns of economic exchange and institutional organizations (204-05).

Apart from elaborating the spatial dynamics of media capital, Curtin in another piece in 2012 further stated three operating principles in defining and forming a media capital, which are borrowed in this thesis to comparing Bollywood in India and the Beijing-centered cultural community in China. The three principles, “logic of accumulation”, “trajectories of creative

migration”, “contours of socio-cultural variation”, work together on the formation of media capital interactively (Curtin, 2012, 181).

The logic of accumulation exists in the media industry as long as enterprises “seek efficiency through the concentration of productive resources and the expansion of markets so as to fully utilize their productive capacity and realize the greatest possible return” (*ibid*). For media capital, the logic of accumulation is adopted through the concentration of creative resources, the decrease of production costs, and the increase of multiple delivery channels, in the aim of enlarging profitable market within the geo-linguistic regions. Along with the economic globalization, runaway productions help global media power like Hollywood to seek low-cost production locations through redeploying and re-concentrating creative resources including facilities and ensuring Hollywood as the “authentic home” of media production, whereas leaving cities like Vancouver as “non-U.S. film production centers” serving for pro-globalization (Johnson-Yale 113).

The trajectories of creative migration focus attracting creative talents from each media capital. According to Curtin (2012), creative labor should be regarded as “core resource”, prior to any business talk of audiovisual production (183). A new prototype created during Hollywood’s global expansion contains localized programming and globalized production. Constant changes in content output required by the new prototypes of film and television program making require various levels of labors to meet both the demand for “stimulat(ing) novelty” and the need of working on daily basis, which is the reason that media enterprises tend to cluster in certain cities where provide not only efficient costs on personnel but also “mutual learning effects” from high-level media talents (Huang 180; Curtin, 2012, 183). Whether through informal learning (such as communications on shooing sites) or formal learning (such as film

festivals or trade associations), labor clustering can upgrade product quality and improve innovation, thus the mutual learning should be institutionalized to “foster the reproduction and enhancement of creative labor” in return (Curtin, 2010, 266). Media capitals also are cities that foster creative opportunities for aspiring media talents, build local training programs and labor union, and promote job mobility and intra-industry exchanges on techniques and skills. It is true that media capital is reliant on subcontractors or below-the-line workers for cost efficiency and clustering, however, its further development heavily depends on “the ongoing migration of talent in pursuit of professional opportunities” on a high-level basis (*ibid*). Therefore, the clustering of skilled media talents distinguishes media capital from runaway production cities where is mostly filled with subcontractors and low-cost labors.

The contours of socio-cultural variation are mainly referred to the cultural and social forces in the formation of individual media capital, demonstrating that “national and local institutions have been and remain significant actors in the global cultural economy” (Curtin, 2012, 184). The forces of socio-cultural variation in particular media capital impact on how media products are made and consumed in certain cultural regions. Apart from favored policies from central government, local media enterprises or transnational media conglomerates also exploit cultural and social peculiarities in media production, distribution and exhibition through collecting creative resources and attracting talents. Cultural proximity, “the tendency to prefer media products from one’s own culture or the most similar possible culture,” is consistent with the emergence of regional media production (Straubhaar 85). Therefore, the unique socio-cultural force “carve(s) out market niches that are beyond the reach of powerful but culturally distant competitors,” and the media practitioners take advantage of it to resonate with the cultural disposition within the geo-linguistic regions.

By exploiting Curtin's concept on media capital, the following section intends to find out, by comparing Bollywood's media capital Mumbai with Beijing-centered cultural community through three structural forces, which are the logic of accumulation, trajectories of creative migration, and contours of social-cultural variations, that the ambition of Chinese central government is to build up a global media power instead of fostering a media capital. This chapter will further envision whether China will build up an all-around "Chinawood" or just a "Chinese Hollywood," a runaway production for the global film industry, in the future.

4.2 Bollywood vs. Chinawood

Based in the city of Mumbai, Bollywood, mostly referred as Hindi cinema, produces almost half of the films in the country, belonging to the world's largest film production industry along with other regional film producers, Tollywood, Kollywood, Mollywood and Sandalwood, due to the plurilingual system in India. Locating in western coastal Hindi-speaking area, Mumbai is the center of entertainment, finance and business, and Bollywood, as the spokesperson of Indian films to the rest of the world, has created a stylistic aesthetics widely known by the audiences and sustained a distinctive film production mode, which makes Indian films survive the competition with Hollywood, and distinguish Mumbai from other film production center to become the media capital of India.

Indian and Chinese film industries share similarities and differences when they are facing with Hollywood's "invasion" to their domestic markets. Both with large population size, the potential large box offices are attracting oversea competitor, and Indian's situation is more alluring for its world's fastest population growth with the highest percentage of young people (from 12 to 24 years old) who is the target demographic for Hollywood films (Rosen, 7). Although both placing restrictions on importing Hollywood films in history, India government

abolished the monopoly by National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) on imports in 1992, allowing Hollywood overtly flowing into the domestic market.

Mumbai's Bollywood follows the logic of accumulation during its evolution, to extract productive sources and expansion market to gain maximum and most efficient profits from the industrial operation. After officially granted industry status in 1998, the risky, untaxed cash invested in film production had ended, and funding from reliable sources and from the private sector and government programs, as well as from Hollywood, to boost local media enterprises (Rosen, 21-23). The initial capital accumulation lays the root the extensive media production in Bollywood and the formation of Mumbai as a media capital of India.

Mumbai is identified as a second-tier media center together with Hong Kong and Carol by Michael Keane, and its local media industries are "historically transnational and commercial, serving dispersed but loosely coherent cultural-linguistic formations" (Curtin cited from Keane, 2006, 835-55). One of the reasons that Bollywood films remain strong local market gravitation is the familiar formula that embodies a romantic story of a young, beautiful couple with traditional singing and dancing plots appeared alternately. The singing and dancing become a landmark for Bollywood films, bringing familiarity and consistency for viewers with niche aesthetic admiration.

The unique cultural cohesive force decides how the Bollywood made are consumed within the geo-linguistic population. According to Stanley Rosen (2003), the global fervor caused by Hollywood blockbusters like *Jurassic Park* (1994) and *Titanic* (1998) failed to shake the loyalty of local audiences to the national cinema (17-18). Focusing on producing films in Hindi, the national language with largest users, the major viewers for Bollywood films are Hindi-speaking populations domestically and globally. Domestic box office occupied 75% of an overall income

of Indian films industry in 2016, and Hindi films (mostly produced by Bollywood) earned 43% market share whereas Hollywood imports were only 7%.⁹ Due to the unique cultural heritage of Indian nation, the large amount of Non-resident Indians (NRIs, 13 million worldwide) and other overseas Indians (total 30 million including NRIs) as oversea nationalists and lucrative audiences bring transnational capitals to the Hindi film industry, making Bollywood the second largest exporter of films after Hollywood (Curtain, 2007, 65). International box office was a 7% of the industry's revenue in 2016. However, its remarkable growth rate from 2014 to 2015 was 11.5% comparing to the domestic growth rate of 8.5% in the same period (Guancha). The great attractions from both the domestic and foreign market, mostly constituted by resident and non-resident Indians, allow Bollywood filmmakers to produce films focusing on native culture with local language and film stars.

The success of Bollywood films heavily relies on the advanced delivery system. In order to seek the maximum diasporic viewers overseas, Mumbai-based film enterprises like Eros International and Yash Raj Films not only invest in Bollywood film production but also actively engage in promoting and distributing native films overseas, especially in North American and European countries. Multiple exhibition channels are also set up via online streaming or theater screening to cater for different viewing habits. For example, Comcast's TV on demand service also provide most classic Hindi films, bringing large income from North America to Bollywood as well.¹⁰ Over 120 Indian films (most of them are Hindi) stream on Netflix (Cain). There are over 1,000 screens exhibiting Indian films at any given time in 35 states of the United States in

⁹ Statistics from Deloitte's *Indywood: The Indian Film Industry*, released in September 2016, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/in-tmt-indywood-film-festival-noexp.pdf>.

¹⁰ Information comes from Xfinity official website: <https://www.xfinity.com/corporate/Programming/IntlNetworks/southasian.html>.

2017 (*ibid*). The endeavors greatly contribute to the enlarging of cultural geography and audience demographic of Bollywood films.

Labor mobility in Bollywood shows the vitality of Mumbai in the era of globalization. The changes in content output encourage and attract creative talents for finding more high-end jobs in media production. To cater for the changing aesthetic of the growing population of middle-class around Mumbai area and the demand from younger generation who seek “English language films to sharpen their conversational skills”, local films are made in or dubbed into English, and traditional Bollywood stories are also produced or retold in 3D and IMAX formations, promoting the exchange of creative talents between Bollywood and Hollywood (Govil 34, 39).

Making Bollywood films requires specialized knowledge and skills, and there is a long tradition that labors working in the film industry are usually not educated people of formal schooling but are trained on jobs through “apprenticeship and heredity” (Ganti 185). This characteristic practical-learning process is closely connected to the social class of filmmakers and the status of film industry in India. The first generation of Hindi films, mostly produced in Bollywood, was no more than entertainment to lower class people in India, and they were, along with filmmakers and protagonists, regarded as “uncouth and unrefined” by the middle-class (Ganti 147). Since Bollywood has advanced themselves in the era of globalization, adding modern values and using English dialogues, the second generation of filmmakers and actors/actresses are mostly higher educated from colleges like the state-run Film and Television Institution of India, although they are still primarily taught through apprenticeship due to the unique style and aesthetics of Bollywood films. Producer and director Subhash Ghai endeavored to transform the “apprenticeship-based trade” into a “formally trained profession” by creating a private film school that specifically “serve the needs of Hindi film industry in terms of talent and

training” in 2000 (*ibid*). Such training programs foster the reproduction and improvement of high-level, creative labors, attracting aspiring talents migrated from other places to form a creative community that facilitates mutual learnings with local labors in Mumbai. Hence, Bollywood becomes “magnets for film talents from a regional or even global hinterland, constantly adding to...the density of [its] labor market” (Lorenzen, 104).

As introduced above, media capital does not necessarily correlate with nation’s particular demands in politics, culture and economy. Therefore, Mumbai’s formation of media capital is seldom interfered by government control although the Central Board of Film Certification led by Indian government does regulate heavily on censorship. Bollywood films may be produced outside Mumbai, in Hindi-speaking regions like Goa, and even in foreign cities like Dubai in UAE. They can be distributed by several strong local media companies with shareholders overseas, and they also can be exhibited and consumed on a large scale of landscape attracting domestic and diasporic audiences. Nevertheless, Mumbai as the nexus of all these media activities directs and operates multiple media flows both locally and international, at arm’s length from the state power.

Hong Kong was once a media capital, being the center of Eastern Asian cultural circle as well as Chinese diasporic viewers around the world with its TVB broadcasting oversea and film distribution from Shaw Brothers Studio, and it was built on the complex interactions of economic, historic, social and cultural flows, accumulated great production, distribution sources and creative talents from neighbor areas, according to Michael Curtin’s *Playing to the World’s Biggest Audiences* (2007). After the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong’s status as the media capital has been influenced due to various reasons including the structural adjustment within the industry, the restrictions and regulation from PRC government, and the unstable

political and financial situation, and it has suffered great competition with rapidly growing cities like Beijing and Shanghai, which caused dramatic run-off of creative talents and investment capital from Hong Kong to mainland China. Hong Kong's status and influence of being a media capital have been gradually weakened.

Bollywood and TVB (Hong Kong) are respectively operated and flourishing within Mumbai and Hong Kong centered geo-linguistic regions, not primarily corresponding to the demands of the states. However, the film industry in China has been conducted and supervised by the central government with changing cultural policies aiming to serve the state's and the Party's interests in the first place. The status of cultural industry in China was established since 2002 when former President Jiang Zemin called for the transformation of the domestic cultural system, and President Xi Jinping further claimed that film being a "mass cultural product" should serve for the thrive of cultural industry and win back the audiences and market. Therefore, the film industry is regarded as "ruling technology," and it should be "double functioned" for both the nation's propagandistic role and the development of socialist market economy (Su 31-32). The media center for China can't be a city far away from the state power, on the contrary, it should be in the administrative capital, Beijing, where Film Bureau, the Ministry of Culture, the Party's Ministry of Propaganda and SAPPRFT locate.

Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou are usually abbreviated to "BeiShangGuang" to represent the first level of media metropolises in China, indicating the prominence of these cities in the domestic media industry. Beijing's significance is embedded in its administrative function, yet it fails to carry out the role as the switching point of national media production, distribution and consumption. It associates with the rest two cities as well as other secondary media locales to form a cultural community across the country, and each city carries out a different key task.

For example, Shanghai with Disney resort and the first international film festival is promoting Chinese media products to the world, as well as attracting high-end talents for mutual learnings; Hengdian with its largest film studio in the world is responsible for labor mobility and production resources accumulation. Therefore, the media industry in China is built on the alliance of several cities and locations with each place entwined with others, different from Mumbai being the only center controlling all media flows of Bollywood.

Just like that Hollywood is referred to the film industry in the United States, Chinawood discussed in this thesis is a term defining the Chinese film industry based on Beijing-centered cultural community, instead of the widely known Hengdian World Studios.¹¹ The resources accumulation, talent migration, and socio-cultural forces discussed later correlate the whole industrial operation within Chinawood, instead of within a single city or a certain region.

Media capital is relational and contingent to cultural geography, absorbing popular cultural elements from near and far, distinguishing the production from its competitors, and seeking to circulate media products to the niche audiences as widely as possible within the cultural sphere, just like what Hong Kong and Mumbai have been doing for decades (Curtin, 2010, 270). However, the case in mainland China is distinct. One of the reasons is political demands by Chinese Communist Party's political to enhance soft power by calling for "fast to approach of multi-level, extensive international cultural exchanges and continuously improve the international influence of Chinese culture."¹² The cultural production, which is "heavily bound to

¹¹ the commonly recognized Chinawood comes from different sources from BBC and The Wall Street Journal, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140207-is-chinawood-the-new-hollywood>; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703730804576315433036267872>.

¹² Information comes from "Quadrennial periodic report on measures to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions" by Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China in

cultural policies” in post-socialist China, guides domestic film production to create and promote Chinese image to the world instead of focusing on market niches within the shared cultural regions (Su 10). Therefore, the expected Chinawood is not a typical media phenomenon based on media capital such as Bollywood, however, it still needs to delineate the operations of Chinawood based on the three principles that play the structuring role in media industries, which are the logic of accumulation, trajectories of creative migration, and contours of socio-cultural variation.

The distribution system for Chinese media products, particularly Chinese-made films lacks multiple delivery channels to attract potential diasporic and other foreign viewer groups. Due to the cultural distance, the value of media production may be undermined when it is consumed outside the native cultural community. According to Rosen (2003), Chinese overseas diasporas are less loyal than Indian counterparts (17, 19). Most Chinese immigrants whose ancestors were from Fujian and Guangzhou are more familiar with Cantonese pop culture centered in Hong Kong than mainland’s media products in Mandarin. Along with the diminished film and television program production in Hong Kong, the influences of TVB and Hong Kong-made films have been decreased within the pan-South and East Asian area, let alone the foreign Chinese. Furthermore, the media production that mostly are Mandarin-speaking in mainland China has “a minor impact on the world circulation of audiovisual goods and services” because larger Hollywood imports comparing to smaller media exports causes the cultural trade deficit in China after its joining the WTO, nor can it replace Hong Kong’s media transmission to geo-linguistic region interspersed in Asia (Vlassis 10; Curtin, 2007, 288-89).

The delivery system of Chinawood heavily relies on theater chains and Hollywood partners and lacks diversity to dig deep into potential audiences. Comparing to several media magnates in Bollywood who have dedicated to distributing native films to global market, such as Reliance Big Pictures, AdLabs and FIP, Hollywood distributors like Sony Pictures Classics, Well Go USA and Universal are mainly responsible for Chinese films' oversea distribution, and most of them are Kung Fu films preferred by western audiences. For example, *Crouching Tiger* and *Kung Fu Hustle* were distributed by Sony Pictures Classics when the Kung Fu craze peaked in the American market, and the success of *Hero* in North American is inseparable from Miramax's preparation and marketing for almost one year screened in more than two thousand theaters. Only a few distribution companies like China Lion Film Distribution (located in Los Angeles) concentrate on screening national films of other genres to the United States, but they usually cover a limited number of cities with small number of screens and seldom promote or market to foreign audiences.¹³ According to the CEO Jiang Yanming of China Lion Film Distribution, Chinese films are mostly screened in Chinatown, so it is not cost-efficient to invest more on marketing compared with Hollywood's grand premiere in China (*ibid*). Since the decreasing fever towards Chinese Kung Fu films among western audiences and the unsatisfactory qualities of Chinese-made, the enormously successful products like *Hero* or *Crouching Tiger* are getting harder to be reproduced on a regular basis (*ibid*). Taking Stephen Chow's *Mermaid* (2016) for example, although being the domestic box office champion in that year, its American distributor, Sony Pictures Releasing, arranged only 35 screens during the

¹³ The information collected from several industrial reports and critiques written by industrial insiders in China: <http://www.tmtpost.com/1667099.html>, <http://107cine.com/stream/77689>, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/22529471>, and <http://www.jiemian.com/article/1316198.html>.

opening weekend, hence, its overseas sales account for only 5% percent of the total revenue, hardly causing any influence on global market.

The collaboration with Hollywood in distribution, surely, can enlarge the scope of screening Chinese film, yet it fails to dig deep and explore the potential foreign or diasporic audience groups because the distribution method lacks cultural specific, failing to provide multiple channels for audiences who are interested in watching Chinese made from online or at home, according to an industrial report on Chinese film delivery in *Jiemian* (Guancha). While in Bollywood's case, although relatively small in percentage, Bollywood films gained foreign revenue from cable and network broadcasting as well as online streaming, speaking directly to niche audiences all around the world.¹⁴

The primary capital accumulation came from the revenues of imported films in domestic theaters before China's entering WTO. The state-crafted marketization and commercialization of the film sector as introduced in the first chapter adjust the structure of national film industry, collect capitals from various sources, integrate productive facilitates and resources from private and nation-owned, and most importantly, introduce private sectors from Hong Kong, Taiwan and abroad to film production, resulting in hybridized style and aesthetics of film production.

After China's entry into WTO, domestic films came across dramatic decrease in box office sales from 2001 to 2003 when over 60% revenue was earned by Hollywood imports, leaving only 10% for mainland films. The Chinese Ministry of Culture rediscovered a slogan from Mao's regime and adapted it to the changed cultural policies, which was "borrowing a ship to sail across the sea" ("jiechuan chuhai" in Chinese), and it laid emphasis on enhancing the power

¹⁴ Yiyu Guancha, "Yindu Dianying Heyi zai Zhongmei Tongshi Shanguang?", *Jiemian*, May 21, 2017, <http://www.jiemian.com/article/1316198.html>.

of domestic media industries with the help from advanced foreign sectors.¹⁵ A document titled “Several Opinions on Foreign Investment in the Cultural Industry” was issued in 2005, strictly limiting the share percentage of pure foreign investment. Based on the policy change, Hollywood studios also converted their policies from investing independently to China to collaborating with local filmmakers in major cities in China because they have realized the vulnerability of foreign companies exposed to the nation’s policy changes (Su 37). In 2004, Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) was launched, attracting Hong Kong media companies to collaborate with the mainland by offering favorable conditions for production and allowing certain amounts of Sino-Hong Kong co-produced enjoy a larger share of sales as domestic-made instead of imports. Not only Hollywood and other traditional Hong Kong’s investors were more willing to venture in Chinawood, but local companies also eagerly “went north” (“beishang” in Chinese) to seek for cost-efficient co-production with the mainland partners. Within the cultural area of China, the complex flows of capital have transferred from Hong Kong to mainland China, to cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, because these cities enjoy favored policies for media production, rendering guaranteed profits from capital investment. Due to the cultural policy changes that aim at local protection, domestic film share in the market increased to more than 50% since 2004 and reached to 59% in 2013 (*ibid*). However, the global influence of Chinese films still needs to be strengthened since Chinese media industry is experiencing a cultural trade deficits because only 3% of domestic made can be exported to foreign markets in

¹⁵ The slogan is translated by the author, and the information of the cultural policy is collected from several articles on the mouthpiece of the state and the Party, including CCTV website: <http://news.cctv.com/2017/03/21/ARTIIIWYazsNmM6jcVWHnJZ170321.shtml>, People’s Daily: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2017-02/27/content_1753406.htm, Guangming Daily: <http://www.chinanews.com/yl/2017/05-04/8215271.shtml>, and Public Diplomacy website: <http://www.pdcec.com/bencandy.php?fid=176&id=39085>.

2015, comparing with Bollywood's 38.72 million dollar sales in the world markets in the same year when most of the Bollywood made film in Hindi or English can be exported.¹⁶

Along with the capital flows, a migration of different levels of creative talents and labors from Hong Kong and places outside the geo-linguistic cultural regions to mainland China also indicates the transfer of cultural center from Hong Kong, the traditional media capital, to Chinawood. Hong Kong filmmakers who “are absorbed in projects with commercial power” have established a “colony” in Beijing (Davis 199). In fact, the municipal power from the central government promotes communications between heads of film production and institutional leaders as well as an intra-industry exchange through building CBD International Media Industry Cluster in Beijing's Chaoyang District (Huang 184). Major domestic media companies and Hollywood studios place their headquarters or Chinese divisions in CBD area to guarantee that they are near at hand of government so as to “keep up with the trends” (*ibid*). International film festivals held in Beijing, Shanghai and Taipei also encourage high-level talents exchange and communication on film production and distribution. Top ten academies of arts scatter across the nation, from Beijing and Shanghai to Urumchi and Nanning, cultivating highly educated practitioners from shooting to acting in media production. A large amount of below-the-line labors are gathered in production studios nationwide represented by Hengdian World Studios and Huairou Film and Media Base, providing efficient cost on labor and shooting facilitates for national and foreign media production. The “borrowing a ship” policy also advocates borrowing advanced technologies and formation for domestic filmmaking, therefore, Chinese branches of Hollywood studios, such as Oriental DreamWorks, based in Shanghai, enable such mutual

¹⁶ Data collected from websites: <https://www.statista.com/topics/2140/film-industry-in-india/>, <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/largest-film-industries-in-the-world.html>, and <http://www.imxdata.com/archives/8370>.

learnings for the purpose of “in China for China and for export to the rest of the world” as the latter half the policy, “to sail across the sea”.

The contours of socio-cultural variation distinguish Chinawood from Bollywood because the former aims at the global market and diverse audiences and the latter targets to niche audiences within the cultural sphere. From the perspective of cultural policies, although the mode of co-production adds value to films because they can be distributed to larger cultural areas through diverse channels, the sensitive censorship from mainland deprives the “edgy, irreverent, or trendy [contents] that compete well with counterparts from media metropolises worldwide” in former Hong Kong or Taiwan films, making them safe in topics and inevitable mediocre to viewers who prefers the traditional stylistic Hong Kong made before the 1990s (Curtin, 2010, 26). Such situations also happen on domestic made and Sino-Hollywood co-ventures as discussed in previous chapters. Taking advantage of favored policies that encourage film sector to “borrowing a ship to sail across the sea”, local institutions and private media conglomerates also collaborate with Hollywood studios to advocate films with Chinese characteristics to the world through adapting Chinese stories to a global-popular formation, for both political and economic benefits. Wanda Group, Huayi Brothers, Bona Film Group Limited, Alibaba Pictures and other pioneers constitute a transnational media power of Chinawood to transfer and exchange capitals, labors, creative resources with Hollywood counterpart. Therefore, Chinawood is not a Bollywood-like film industry based on media capital who insulate itself from foreign competitors, but rather an imitator of Hollywood based on a nationwide cultural alliance centered in Beijing, and it simultaneously face directly to the competition with Hollywood in order to earn global market as wide as possible outside the cultural sphere.

4.3 Brandscapes of Chinawood

The ambition of being a global media power drives Chinawood to create world-famous “brandscapes” like those held by Hollywood for decades. Stimulated by a short-term plan of “borrowing a ship to sail across the sea”, Chinawood sacrifices its soft power of productive capacity to exchange the hard power as massive building and purchasing tangible properties, which ultimately results in an unbalanced brand-building that shapes the formation of Chinese representation in Sino-Hollywood jointly produced films.

According to the discussion in previous sector, a Sino-Hollywood collaboration was highlighted by a series of policy-driven measures implemented by Chinese government to overcome the lack of global influence of its domestic made on world popular culture, partially exposing the once closed Chinese market to the world, and Chinese media industry was also involved in the international discourse. Hence, the guideline for Chinawood, “borrowing a ship to sail across the sea”, encourages domestic film sector to step into the water of world competition, instead of merely being the “follower” of Hollywood although “China complies with the institutional architecture of (Hollywood’s) global governance of cultural industries” (Vlassis 10). The central government aims to popularize itself to the world by strengthening Chinawood as a commensurate global media competitor to Hollywood.

Prior to Chinawood’s formation, the government should learn what Hollywood is. Out of most people’s expectation, today’s Hollywood can’t be geographically defined, not only because the runaway productions in many cities around the world provide optimal choices for its multinational studios, but also because the media conglomerates are integrated with globalized capitals and other productive resources. Therefore, for a government-dominated film industry in China grew to be a world power, the state should assign multiple obligations to several cities in

order to optimize allocation of resources; and the industrial practitioners need to change the role from a receiver to a buyer, from a passive consumer to an active producer, from providing a market to being a partner.

To achieve the two tasks, the government's macro-control is implemented through related decrees. Released in 2011, the PRC's twelfth five-year plan for the first time officially endorsed the cultural industry as the "pillar" in China's long-term plan for its healthy economic growth, and it advocated a "major and prosperous development" in media industries by further "liberating the cultural production force" under the guidance of government administrations including the Ministry of Culture and SAPPRFT (Hong 1048-49). The vague objective can be explained, according to Kokas (2017), that to liberate the cultural production force requires the enhancement of both hard infrastructure ("physical space for industrial development") and soft infrastructure ("workforce skills development") (24). Hollywood's brand building, or "brandscape" used by Kokas, has integrated the hard power, including the tangible facilities and iconic landscape, and soft power, consisting of creative talents and advanced technologies in filmmaking (*ibid*). Sino-Hollywood collaboration encouraged by Chinese cultural policy of "borrowing a ship" is an important method for the film industry to learn how to build "brandscape" from its partner. Through sharing brandscapes of both soft and hard infrastructures, Chinese and American film industries have been more entwined and interacted, which not only helpful for China's "sailing across the sea" but also contributes to Hollywood's amplification.

To further acknowledge the definition of brandscape, Kokas first introduces a term "brand", which is defined by market researchers as a brand consists of three components: "the image of the provider of the product/service, or corporate image; the image of the user; and the image of the product/service itself" (Kokas cited Biel, 2013, 7). Learning from Hollywood's

experiences that “the branding of products is often more important than futile attempts to control the mode of distribution,” it is vital for Chinawood to brand itself as a marketable product/service rather than selling the unwanted to others (Curtin, 2003, 212).

Brandscapes as physical manifestations are built around conceived ideology, and they materialize the values of particular products or services into tangible territories. Brandscapes, in the media industry, are to create landscapes for “consumption and engagement” with brands, and they can be more effective if brands are already familiar to viewers and consumers than those are new or less popular (Kokas 40-41). For the Sino-Hollywood collaboration, the brandscapes “are capital-driven, real-estate intensive projects that accelerate the growth of marketing infrastructure in China” (*ibid*). For example, the typical Sino-US brandscape is Shanghai Disney Resort, based on the world famous intellectual property from Walt Disney Studios, contributing to a long-term exchange of technologies, labors, and branding skills comparing to short-term film co-production.

Brandscapes of Hollywood studios are tangible landscapes built on intangible brands, which means that the brands (or popular intellectual properties) as soft infrastructure antecedently exist before the materialized territories as the hard infrastructure. The hard infrastructure can only take effect when there is a mature soft infrastructure preexisting, which is not mentioned by Aynne Kokas in her book yet will be further discussed later in this section.

Brandscapes of Hollywood are also based on the already-existed cinematic icons produced by studios. Disney Resorts and Universal Studios Hollywood can be transplanted to any place around the world whenever it has cultivated a group of loyal audiences/consumers of the brands. With the famous Disneyland in Shanghai and a coming Universal theme park outside Beijing, Chinawood is surely getting financial profits from foreign investment and local site to operate.

However, no matter how popular and profitable the Shanghai Disneyland can be, the local site can only be benefited from its hard infrastructure, but it is the soft infrastructure attracting most tourists. It is a Chinese company who controls the site, but it is Disney who owns the brand. A site without brand can be no more than a facility, but a brand can be popular and profitable whether accompanies with a facility or not. Therefore, no matter how advanced the hard infrastructure can be, Chinawood is unable to build its own brandscapes as long as it lacks a popular brand of marketable media product/service that is widely known around the world. Chinawood's ambition of being a global media power as a competitor of Hollywood can only be fulfilled when it gains abilities to develop both soft and hard infrastructures so that it can build its own brandscapes for massive cultural output to the world.

The shared brandscapes of Sino-Hollywood collaboration bring about an exchange of capitals and productive resources. It is not a one-sided transportation from Hollywood to China only, but a bi-directional industrial operation that ultimately influences the filmmaking and brand-building in both film industries. Hollywood's dominant control over soft infrastructure and China's expanding pursuit of foreign hard infrastructure co-create a brandscape embedded in most Sino-Hollywood film collaborations, which shapes Chinese representation as a shared cultural identity that contains a globally applicable core, yet decorated by Chinese cultural markers.

The Oriental DreamWorks in Shanghai brings with both solid and soft power to the city. As a division of Hollywood's DreamWorks, this infrastructure brings a double-edged sword to Shanghai and the film industry, because, on the one hand, the constellation effect will make Shanghai as a center of animation production in China and even in the world; on the other hand, the highly-unified production in format and content from Hollywood may influence the diversity

and the creativity of local animation production. Taking *Kung Fu Panda 3* for example, participating in such a global-hit surely brings fame to the animation industry in Shanghai. The characters and ideologies are so Americanized that can hardly be classified as brands of China, although it was co-produced by two DreamWorks studios. Created by American co-workers, the iconic image of Po, the Kung Fu Panda, is widely favored based on the global popularity of Chinese panda, and he speaks English instead of Chinese in films screened in most of the countries. In fact, the technologies in animation making were taught from Hollywood to labors in Shanghai studios, who mostly comply the demands from the headquarter instead of creating novelty for the franchise.

As for Wanda Group's twice boldly purchasing into Hollywood, the commercial benefits are far less than establishing the brand effect. Being a pioneer of Chinese film industry, Wanda Group has earned its fame as an overall practitioner in the film industry, from media investment, production, distribution to exhibition. It is branding itself as a strong participant, not an outsider, in the world's media market, although such brand-building can't equal to the brands of intellectual properties because it is built primarily based on hard infrastructures such as the foreign studios and theater chains. Other film syndicates in China, whether before it or after it, collaborating with Hollywood, establishing an aggressive image of Chinese private practitioners who are ambitious of being the vital player in the global market. Free flows of capital and productive resources including film creators and shooting facilities have exchanged between two partners, yet the content making is still dominated by Hollywood's side who processes the convincing power of brand-building. Therefore, despite Chinese media sector acquires hard power in a short term, it still lacks the soft power of creating content and developing skills and technologies, which are fundamental to brandscape and filmmaking.

The imbalance participation of filmmakers leads to that the indigenous culture can only alter itself to be adapted to a global-hit formula. Through the discussion of the representations of China and Chinese culture in the second chapter, the image is portrayed as a shared identity that is both market-friendly with familiarities and hybridized with universal values, no matter in which kind of film cooperation, especially in global blockbusters. Regardless the box offices of those films, Chinese filmmakers and stars seldom participated in the content creation when most directors, scriptwriters, and film editors are from Hollywood studios. And in most films, Chinese characters and cultural elements function as added value of products, failing to represent either the country or the culture. Apart from that, the financial investment in foreign films without Chinese elements belongs to a pure capital operation, which is a simple business behavior, having nothing to do with mutual learning proclaimed by the domestic filmmakers, let alone the content creation or cultural identity promotion. Under this circumstance, Chinese representation remains a mixed portrayal collecting Chinese Kung Fu, universal values, and Hollywood-inclined aesthetic preference. Therefore, when a collaborated blockbuster succeeds in the global market, it can't be regarded as the winning of Chinese image promotion, and vice versa.

The cultural policy of “borrowing a ship to sail across the sea” regulates only the form and style of collaborating with foreign “ships” but fails to elaborate how to sail across the sea with ships made of our own. It seems that the collaboration in hard infrastructure meets the demand of Chinese government's political appeal of marketing and branding itself as a strong economic and cultural power in the world. However, the most important point is still missing in this image, which is the ability to produce content by Chinawood. Brandscapes of China in collaboration with overseas counterparts is built on the branding system of Hollywood, at the expense of the ability to produce the soft power of /by one's own. The key note should be

remembered is that the soft infrastructure is always prior to the hard infrastructure. Therefore, to actual “sail across the sea”, that is, to brand Chinawood to the world, can only embark on homemade ships, which means the productive capacities of making and promoting domestic-made global hits.

Hengdian World Studios serves for the distribution of resources and optimization of structure, as a fundamental link in building Beijing-centered cultural community. The reason why it was mistaken as “Chinawood” by the foreign press is that of its systematic industrial chains, covering from horizontally accommodation and tourism to vertically professional training and post production. As the largest (by far) shooting site in China, Hengdian is also famous in the world due to its grandness and prosperity. The “grandness” can be easily reached since the place is still enlarging by building up more sites every day, and hosting dozens of crews of film and TV program shooting at any given time reflects its prosperity. Hengdian is an adequate hard infrastructure for Chinawood, however, its soft strength is still in question.

The business in Hengdian is contributed by not only the above-the-line directors and stars but also a large amount of below-the-line day labors, including extras and technicians on site. In fact, an increasing Hollywood studios discover the financial advantages of shooting in China, partly due to the lower cost labor who are unprotected by the union (Kokas, 114). According to the definition of trajectories of creative migration in media capital, which not only provides jobs and sponsorship, but also offer opportunities to learn from other creative communities, it is obviously that Hengdian is not the place for cultural/skill exchange from domestic and overseas level, because there is only one-direction flow from local labors to foreign films’ shootings. Although being widely known as Chinawood, Hengdian is no more than Vancouver in Canada, a runaway production site for transnational media conglomerates. It is not enough to be a runaway

production if Hengdian or Chinawood endeavors to acquire the soft infrastructure because an “off land” production site can only serve as the facility of Hollywood’s branding but is incapable to produce brands of its own. Without further educating below-the-line day labors to be above-the-line labors, Hengdian can be no more than a production site, and it can only be remembered as a landscape instead of a cinematic icon.

Wang Jianlin, the CEO of Wanda Group, also announced its plan to build up the world’s largest film making facility in Qingdao, named Oriental Movie Metropolis, in 2013. Although this giant ecosystem is still in developing, the recruit has begun with a favored policy of 40% tax drawback. Different from Hengdian, Wang’s plan is to create a high-end landscape similar to the expensive property in Los Angeles’ Hollywood. No more low-waged labors, but more actors, sound editors, costume designers, special-effects experts, writers, and other creative professionals will gather in Qingdao far away from Hollywood or even from Europe, living for a year-round without constantly flying in and out (Shih and McGee, 51). The creation of such talent migration will “take decades, not years”, just like Hollywood studios accumulated its vertical integration during the golden age, however, today’s Hollywood succeed in converting agglomeration into discrete enterprises, opposite to it.

In the future, Chinese authority will continue its plan to become a world-class media power through promoting its brand on the platform of Chinawood, although today’s Chinawood can only be called Chinese Hollywood, not a global Chinawood.

Phoon Chiong Kit, the former executive director of Golden Harvest Entertainment once states that “(Chinese film) industry has to modernize and globalize its operations” while “it must continue to nurture its distinctive connections to the storytelling conventions of the past and the cultural affinities of the audiences” (Curtin, 2007, 253). Although his standing point is to build

China as a strong local media region, his remark foregrounds the importance of content creating in developing a powerful industry. Although brandscapes are critical for a media industry thriving to become a global media power, one can't fulfill a short-term goal by only pursuing hard infrastructure, at the expense of losing soft infrastructure as productive capacity. The unbalanced brand-building influences the right of decision-making of producing in Sino-Hollywood film co-ventures because the profit-driven nature decides that it is safer to adopt Hollywood's mature formula rather than investing heavily in Chinese culture and aesthetics that are not widely known for international audiences. Therefore, the combination of Chinese hard power combines Hollywood soft power shapes Chinese representation as a hybridized image with Chinese markers decorating globally applicable values.

The "multi-level, extensive international cultural exchanges" as expected by the central government is still limited to capital exchange between Sino and foreign collaboration at the current stage. The market incentives rooted in lower labor or facilities costs can prove that Chinawood is nothing but still-a-runaway production site. No matter how many famous hard infrastructures or materialized brandscapes like Shanghai Disneyland it builds, Chinawood can't be another Hollywood, as long as it is still sailing in a borrowed ship. It is the soft power, which contains the aspiring talents, the technologies, the skills, and the creative capacity, that decides the strength of a global media power. To be a competitor or a worthy foe of Hollywood, Chinawood should shift its focus on cultivating the soft power so that it can build its own landscapes for cultural exporting to the welcoming world markets.

5 CONCLUSION

A spectrum framed by three practitioners, which are Hollywood, the Chinese government, and the Chinese film industry, covers the domain of film production heavily

influenced by global Hollywood and the industrialized Chinese film industry, including Chinese homemade film production that are expected to go global, imported film production from Hollywood under film quota, and, of course, Sino-Hollywood film collaboration and co-production. In the era of globalization, Hollywood cinema, backed by Americanized capitalism, has dominated the global media market for years, and it continues to occupy larger trade share by exploring rising countries like China. With the dramatic growth of Chinese film market and the great potential of its film industry, both Chinese government and indigenous filmmakers utilize the opening-up policy and strict censorship system as leverage power to negotiate with Hollywood in exchange for, on the one hand, strengthening the soft power as compatible to the country's economic growth, and, on the other hand, expanding the market of the world for larger share of benefits.

Within this tug-of-war, the dynamic power play and constant negotiation between cultural policies and industrial practices generate three kinds of mode of production that dominates the Sino-Hollywood film collaborating. The Sino-Hollywood co-ventures concentrate on producing the blockbuster, which is the most popular and profitable film genre promoted by Hollywood studios. Caldwell's methodology on production culture is exploited in case studies of these three kinds of film productions, including fake co-production, Sino-Hollywood equity co-production, and official co-production. Within the regulatory frame, the Chinese presentations in Sino-Hollywood collaborations are hybridized cultural pastiches consisting of marketable elements and mature formula, portraying China as a Kung Fu country with advanced skills or technology and universal values with other shared cultural markers embedded in both modern and ancient times.

By comparing Chinawood, which is a Beijing-centered cultural community consisting of an alliance of several cities including Shanghai and Hengdian, with Bollywood according to Curtin's concept of media capital, the author tries to explain that China's ambition is to become a global media power as a critical part of enhancing soft power instead of creating local media capitals. Learning from Hollywood's successful brand-building experiences, Chinawood also endeavors to create its own brandscapes, a term introduced by Kokas. The cultural strategy of "borrowing a ship to sail across the sea" guides Chinawood and its industrial practitioners to build up materialized "brandscapes" as a short-term plan, ignoring the importance of forming productive capacity in filmmaking. Therefore, the imbalanced brandscapes lead to the portrayal of a hybridized Chinese representation with cultural pastiches because Chinese partners lack the right of decision making in such Sino-Hollywood film co-ventures. Therefore, this aim of growing to be a global media power can only be fulfilled when Chinawood can produce and promote its own brandscapes with enhanced soft infrastructure for massive cultural output to the global markets.

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